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Item 35 of the provisional agenda*
The situation in the Middle East

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains a reply received from the Syrian Arab Republic in response to the note verbale dated 12 May 2011 from the Secretary-General concerning the implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions 65/17, entitled "Jerusalem", and 65/18, entitled "The Syrian Golan".

* A/66/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 65/17 and 65/18. In its resolution 65/17, the Assembly stressed that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the City of Jerusalem should take into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides and should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by the people of all religions and nationalities. In its resolution 65/18, which deals with Israeli policies in the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, the Assembly demanded once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

2. On 12 May 2011, in order to fulfil my reporting responsibility under resolutions 65/17 and 65/18, I addressed notes verbales to the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Representatives of other Member States to the United Nations requesting them to inform me of any steps their Governments had taken or envisaged taking concerning implementation of the relevant provisions of those resolutions. As at 31 August 2011, one reply had been received from the Syrian Arab Republic. This reply is reproduced in section II of the present report.

II. Reply received from Member States

Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]

Since the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan in 1967, the international community has consistently maintained its forceful rejection of that occupation, demanding that occupying Israeli forces should be withdrawn from all of the Syrian Golan. The General Assembly, in its resolution 65/18, affirmed the deep concern felt by the international community at the failure of Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan and comply with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions adopted in that regard. In resolution 65/18, the Assembly declared that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and had no validity whatsoever, as confirmed by the Security Council in its resolution 497 (1981), and called upon Israel to rescind the decision.

After 44 years of that despotic occupation, notwithstanding internationally recognized resolutions, the demands for that occupation to end that have been made at international gatherings by most countries of the world and condemnation of the daily Israeli tyrannical practices and blatant violations of all international conventions and customs, Israel remains indifferent to all those demands and international resolutions. There are no obstacles placed in the path of its expansionist ambitions and no limits to its impunity and disregard for international law.

The Syrian Arab Republic has affirmed its intense desire to continue to work and cooperate with the United Nations with a view to ending that occupation through the implementation of the relevant resolutions on ending the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and other Arab territories. On the basis of that understanding, the Syrian Arab Republic states in no uncertain terms that United Nations resolutions continue to serve as the basic terms of reference for the just and comprehensive resolution of the problems in the Middle East. Given that fixed principle of Syrian policy, President Bashar al-Assad has declared on more than one occasion that the Syrian Arab Republic is willing to resume peace negotiations on the same basis on which the Madrid peace process was started in 1991. The Syrian Arab Republic has also declared in all international forums its full commitment to the relevant international resolutions and has called for their implementation, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). The Syrian Arab Republic has also called for implementation of the principle of land for peace, in order to ensure full withdrawal by Israel from all of the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967.

The Syrian Arab Republic strongly condemns the continued denial by Israel of Arab and Syrian rights as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and, in particular, its criminal mass murder of peaceful demonstrators in occupied Syrian territory who were merely trying to remind the world of their right to return to their homes in the cities and towns in the occupied Syrian Golan and Occupied Palestinian Territory that they were forced to leave over four decades ago. We note in this regard that on 5 June 2011, the forty-fourth anniversary of the 1967 Naksa, the Israeli occupation forces perpetrated an abhorrent massacre when they fired live ammunition at peaceful unarmed Syrian and Palestinian demonstrators on the Syrian side of the ceasefire line in the occupied Syrian Golan, resulting in 23 dead and 350 injured. We also note that on 15 May 2011, the occupation forces committed a similar crime near the ceasefire line in the occupied Syrian Golan during a commemoration of the 1948 Nakba, when they fired live ammunition to disperse peaceful demonstrators, resulting in 15 dead and dozens injured. These incidents demonstrate that there are certain people who want Israel to remain the single exception to application of the provisions of international law and to benefit from impunity in all situations.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic denounces the decisions made by the Israeli Government to intensify settlement in the occupied Syrian Golan, of which the most recent was the settlement campaign conducted by the so-called Golan Regional Council during December 2010 under the slogan "Come to the Golan", which was designed to induce thousands of Israeli families to settle in the Golan. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also condemns the Golan Regional Council's decision, endorsed by the Government of the occupation, to build a new tourist settlement village near the Israeli settlement of Ani'am. It also condemns the cooperation between the Regional Council and the management of the extremist religious settlement of Yonatan, which aims to attract thousands of settlers to the occupied Syrian Golan, and the focus by Israeli tourism companies on building settlements in the guise of "tourist villages" in the Batihah region in the far south of the occupied Golan and, in particular, in the region known as Tall al-Sayyadin on the eastern shore of Lake Tiberias. It also condemns the tourist excursions to those villages that are organized by international Jewish organizations and the infrastructure development and settlement expansion by the occupation

authorities in the settlements of, inter alia, Eliad, Ein Zivan, Natur, Khasfin, Hadnes and Nof. Such Israeli actions make it clear that the true intention of Israel is to reject peace, paying no heed to Security Council or General Assembly resolutions, the most recent of which is General Assembly resolution 65/106, which reiterated the demand for the complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities and other Israeli activities in the occupied Syrian Golan.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns the distribution by the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in New York of products from the occupied Syrian Golan, and stresses that such behaviour constitutes a flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and General Assembly resolution 65/179, entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources". The Syrian Arab Republic calls on Member States of the United Nations to refuse to import such goods in order to comply with international law and emphasize the need for Israel to respect that law.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the Israeli occupying authorities for extracting water from Mas`adah Lake in the occupied Syrian Golan and diverting it to settlement farms in December 2010. As a result of that Israeli measure, which contravenes international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, Syrian citizens in the Golan have sustained material losses that are estimated at some $20 million. Those losses have been incurred by the loss of fish stocks and poor apple yields in the farms that are irrigated by lake waters and the inadequacy of water for orchards. We have made previous reference in our annual reports on Israeli practices in the Golan to the policies of the Israeli occupying authorities, which are deliberately designed to control the waters of the Golan and deny Syrian citizens their natural rights over their own water. This latest Israeli measure, namely, the extraction of the waters of Mas`adah Lake, constitutes an economic and environmental catastrophe of enormous proportions for Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan.

Israel's actions are, indeed, a violation of Security Council resolution 465 (1980), seventh preambular paragraph, which calls upon Israel to take into account the need to consider measures for the impartial protection of private and public land and property, and water resources. Israeli actions are, furthermore, a violation of paragraph 5 of the aforementioned resolution, which determines that all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity. Security Council resolution 497 (1981) confirmed that those measures were null and void and without international legal effect.

The Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions, demands that the General Assembly and the international community should assume their responsibility to prevent Israel from persisting in its sustained violations, with particular respect to the plundering of the natural resources of occupied Arab territories, including water in the occupied Syrian Golan.

The Syrian Arab Republic rejects the Israeli Knesset decision of 22 November 2010 to hold a referendum on withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and East Jerusalem, requiring the support of more than 80 per cent of Israelis for such withdrawal. That decision represents a violation of, and shows contempt for,

international law, which stipulates that territory may not be acquired by force. It is also incompatible with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms the request it has made to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross to bring pressure to bear on Israel to ensure that the Syrian prisoners detained in its jails are kept in more humane health conditions. It expresses its rejection of the sham trial conducted on 14 July 2010 by the Israeli District Court in Nazareth of Majid al Sha'ir, who was sentenced to five and one half years in prison, and his son, Fida al-Sha'ir, who was sentenced to three years in prison, on the charge of passing information to the Syrian motherland. It also expresses its rejection of the sham trial by the Israeli occupation authorities of Syrian citizen Yusuf Shams, who was sentenced by the Israeli occupation authorities to five years in prison.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also emphasizes its request to the above-mentioned international figures to bring pressure to bear on Israel to rescind its decision barring visits by citizens from the occupied Syrian Golan to their homeland, the Syrian Arab Republic, through the Qunaitra crossing. In December 2010, as one outcome of that decision, relatives of the young Syrian student Firas Abu Salih were prevented for three days from crossing into their motherland Syria to be at his side as he was lying in Shami Hospital in Damascus, on the pretext that they did not have permission to cross from the Israeli army. That decision should be rescinded in view of the material, mental and physical suffering of Syrian citizens caused by that tyrannical Israeli practice, which contravenes the Geneva Conventions and all international humanitarian instruments and norms. The Government stresses that Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan exceed all legal and moral bounds, the most recent example being the imposition by the Israeli occupation authorities of two years' house arrest on a two-year-old child, Fahid Lu'ay Shuqeir, on the pretext that he was born outside Israel when his parents were studying in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes the need to take measures to ensure the implementation of relevant international resolutions without bias or selectivity, and to invoke the Geneva Conventions in order to bring pressure to bear on Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the wishes of the international community in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Similarly, the Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes its support for General Assembly resolution 65/17, entitled "Jerusalem", and calls upon the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to end its occupation of the Arab territories that it has occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and comply with Security Council resolution 478 (1980), in which the Council decided not to recognize the "basic law" regarding Jerusalem that was enacted by Israel and affirmed that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the city of Jerusalem was illegitimate and therefore null and void and without any validity whatsoever. The Syrian Arab Republic also stresses that the continuation by Israel, the occupying Power, of illegal settlement activities, its destruction of Palestinian houses and its construction of the wall in and around East Jerusalem with the goal of isolating the city from the rest of the Occupied

Palestinian Territory and in continuing defiance of the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice, all demonstrate that the goal of Israeli policy is to create a reality that would make the establishment of a viable Palestinian state impossible and undermine any possibility of a peaceful solution.

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Item 70 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/264, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the international response to natural disasters and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. It provides an overview of the occurrence of disasters associated with natural hazards and highlights emerging trends. The report describes several key challenges and looks at progress made in various areas. It concludes with a number of recommendations.

* A/66/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 65/264. The period covered by the report is from 1 June 2010 to 31 May 2011. Where relevant, more recent information has also been included.

II. Year in review (1 June 2010-31 May 2011)

A. Disaster data for the calendar year 2010

2. During the period from January to December 2010, both the number and in particular, the impact of natural disasters increased compared to 2009. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) reported a total of 385 natural disasters that killed over 297,000 people, affected 217 million others and caused an estimated US$ 123.9 billion of economic damage.[1]

3. Although the number of reported disasters was consistent with the annual average during the period from 2000 to 2009 (387 disasters), the number of victims[2] increased compared to 2009, owing to several large-scale disasters. The year was the deadliest in at least two decades and is further dramatic testimony to the growing intensity of extreme events. Natural disasters have continued to occur in countries which were already suffering from conflict, compounding the humanitarian situation for the concerned populations.

B. Climate-related hazard events

4. Hydrological disasters wreaked havoc during the reporting period, as extreme rainfall and associated flooding broke records in many countries. In Asia, Pakistan was struck by the worst floods in its history. Over 18 million people were affected by flooding that inundated one fifth of the country's land mass, destroyed more than 1.8 million homes and made millions homeless. In China, massive floods and landslides caused over 7,000 deaths and affected a total of 134 million people, while economic damages were estimated at $18 billion. In Sri Lanka extreme rainfall caused wide-scale flooding, landslides and displacement, affecting 1.2 million people and displacing over 1 million. In Australia the worst flooding in half a century affected millions of people, while Thailand was affected by both flooding and drought, affecting at least 9 million and 6.5 million people, respectively.

5. In other parts of the world, the heaviest recorded rainfall in Colombia caused floods and landslides, cumulatively affecting 3.7 million people, especially those displaced and made vulnerable by the internal armed conflict. Flooding also affected the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Central America and the Caribbean region. In southern Africa, the rainy season resulted in excessive flooding that reached record river water levels throughout the region. Similarly, extreme rainfall and widespread

[1] The CRED EM-DAT (international disaster database) records disasters which meet at least one of the following criteria: 10 or more people reported killed; 100 or more people reported affected; declaration of a state of emergency; call for international assistance.

[2] Defined by CRED EM-DAT as "the total number of people killed and affected".

flooding affected West Africa, especially Benin, where flooding impacted the lives of 680,000 people and destroyed tens of thousands of homes.

6. The reporting period witnessed a relative lull in terms of meteorological hazards.[3] Regardless, in October 2010 Typhoon Megi impacted the lives of nearly 2 million people and destroyed 30,000 houses in the Philippines, while Cyclone Giri in Myanmar affected 260,000 people and caused 100,000 to lose their homes. In Mexico, hurricanes damaged a total of 500,000 houses.

C. Geological hazard events

7. On 11 March 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and resulting tsunami struck Japan. As of 30 June, the Government confirmed 15,511 deaths, 5,388 injured and 7,189 people missing, while 116,213 persons remained evacuated from the affected areas. The combination of the earthquake and tsunami hazards severely damaged the Fukushima nuclear power plant and caused an increase in the radiation levels in the surrounding areas, thereby underscoring the need for multi-hazard preparedness approaches.

8. Elsewhere, significant earthquakes struck New Zealand first in September 2010 and again in February 2011. The September earthquake caused a total of $6.5 billion in economic damage. In Indonesia, the Mount Merapi volcano erupted twice in October and November 2010, killing 386 people and displacing over 400,000. Also in October, an earthquake and tsunami battered the Mentawai islands, killing 460 people, displacing 15,353 and destroying thousands of houses.

D. Epidemics

9. A cholera outbreak was confirmed in Haiti in October 2010, resulting in more than 5,500 deaths and over 360,000 cumulative cases by the end of May 2011. Although the epidemic seemed to have stabilized in many areas by March, it reached a second peak in late May. Despite a resurgence of cholera cases, mortality rates have been declining steadily in all regions. The resurgence was addressed through coordinated prevention and response actions that also mitigated the further spread of the epidemic. Humanitarian actors will continue to work with line ministries and development actors to ensure sufficient investments in the water and sanitation sectors in order to address the longer-term risks of epidemics.

E. Environmental hazards

10. During the reporting period, technological accidents and natural disasters with resulting environmental emergencies continued to occur, posing great challenges to the lives and livelihoods of affected populations. Events such as oil spills, dam and dyke breaches, acute pollution and poisoning, and nuclear-related accidents highlight the need for greater attention to the humanitarian consequences of environmental and technological disasters. In order to increase the resilience of

[3] CRED EM-DAT defines meteorological hazards as "events caused by short-lived/small to mesoscale atmospheric processes (in the spectrum from minutes to days)", including different varieties of storms.

populations, environmental and technological risk and hazard considerations need to be better integrated into overall preparedness and response policies.

III. Evolving nature of disaster risk

11. The number of people killed by disasters in 2010 (297,000) was well above the annual average of 82,500 from 1970 to 2010. Since 1990, the number of recorded disasters has doubled from about 200 to almost 400 a year. While some of this increase may reflect better reporting, globally, disaster risk is increasing for most hazards, owing mainly to rapidly increasing exposure. More people now live in exposed areas, such as flood plains and coastlines.

12. Despite the overall increase in risk, countries in all regions have been able to reduce mortality risks associated with major weather-related hazards. In most of the world, the risk of being killed by a tropical cyclone or a major river flood is lower currently than it was in 1990.[4] This points to the effectiveness of risk reduction measures. However, the highest burden of natural disaster-related mortality and risk continues to be concentrated in countries with low gross domestic product and weak governance.

13. The link between poverty and disaster risk is well established. Poverty and lack of resources increase vulnerability — the conditions that affect a community's ability to prevent, mitigate, prepare for or respond to hazard events. Global challenges and trends, such as climate change, food and energy price volatility, macroeconomic trends, irregular migration, rapid population growth, unplanned urbanization and environmental degradation, are among the factors challenging progress towards reducing vulnerability in many countries. Disaster risk reduction is also critical to the alleviation of food insecurity and hunger, as natural disasters destroy or erode livelihoods.

14. Rapid economic growth in many low- and middle-income countries has improved human development and reduced poverty for millions of people. This is matched, however, by an equally rapid increase in the exposure of economic assets to natural hazards. Economic losses suffered by low-income households and communities owing to frequently occurring small disasters are increasing rapidly.

15. New evidence confirms that disaster losses particularly affect child welfare and development. Drought, in particular, has been found to have a detrimental impact on child malnutrition rates. Local disaster events have been shown to cause significant reductions in school enrolment. Disasters also have an adverse impact on children's health[5] and children's protection. Such adverse effects of disasters tend to hinder the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

16. As part of risk reduction efforts, Governments and humanitarian organizations are placing greater emphasis on using improved weather and climate information to help reduce the impacts of disasters. Better climate information can inform preparedness, disaster prevention and emergency response. However, the drought in the Horn of Africa has also shown that good early warning systems are only

[4] *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2011*, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

[5] Ibid.

effective if they are used by decision makers to trigger action. Improved monitoring of trends in vulnerability and exposure is also required to further reduce disaster losses.

IV. Key challenges

A. Preparedness for emergency response

17. The trends outlined above show that preparedness for emergency response is of critical and increasing importance in meeting the challenges emanating from the growing number of natural disasters and their impact on the lives and livelihoods of affected populations. Strengthening the capacity of all stakeholders to respond to natural disasters must therefore remain a priority for the United Nations and its partners. Partners have committed to do more through processes such as the Hyogo Framework for Action. However, preparedness encompasses a wide array of activities and the international community still needs to get better at defining roles and responsibilities among humanitarian and development actors, taking into account the aspirations and capacities of the countries in which they are providing assistance.

18. Many examples show that preparedness is a life-saving and cost-effective measure. Effective risk assessment, hazard and epidemiological early warning and risk communication systems, together with community-based preparedness measures, national contingency plans and pre-positioned supplies, have repeatedly been shown to reduce the impacts of disasters on populations in affected countries. But preparedness requires long-term engagement by all partners — Governments, communities, development actors as well as the private sector and humanitarian actors — to help Governments assume leadership and develop their own capacity. Otherwise, growing humanitarian needs will continue to overwhelm limited resources and response capacity, especially in the context of increasing vulnerabilities and drivers of risk, such as climate change, environmental degradation, rapid urbanization and population growth, and a lack of adequate social protection mechanisms.

19. The Hyogo Framework for Action stresses that disaster risk reduction is critical to sustainable social and economic development processes and needs to be addressed in partnership. Disasters undermine development achievements. Priority action five of the Framework — strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels — highlights the essential role that disaster preparedness can play, in particular when integrated into an overall disaster risk reduction approach.

20. Preparedness, in accordance with the Hyogo Framework for Action, is defined as the capacities and knowledge developed by Governments, professional response organizations, communities and individuals to anticipate and respond effectively to the impact of hazard events. It should be based on a sound analysis of disaster risks and be linked to early warning systems. It includes contingency planning, stockpiling of equipment and supplies, emergency services and standby arrangements, communications, information management and coordination arrangements, personnel training, community drills and exercises, and public education. It must be supported by formal institutional, legal and budgetary capacities. It does not include mitigation and prevention measures, such as land use regulations, building standards and crop cycle adjustments, which are equally important in reducing risk and preparing for emergencies.

21. Capacity development is needed to build and maintain the ability of people, organizations and societies to manage risks successfully themselves. Several real time evaluations of previous emergency responses — including the Haiti earthquake and the floods in Pakistan in 2010 — have highlighted the importance and role of national non-governmental organizations as well as civil society more broadly, including youth and women's organizations and networks. Their contributions are generally overlooked and should be encouraged in future preparedness activities. Effective preparedness is locally rooted and therefore requires community participation. The involvement of communities in the design and implementation of activities helps to ensure that they are well tailored to the actual vulnerabilities and to the needs of the affected people.

22. Early warning systems are an essential part of preparedness efforts and can help all actors involved become better at preparing for disasters, rather than reacting to them once they have deteriorated to crisis level. The recent example and response to the drought in the Horn of Africa, however, showed that early warning messages are only effective if they are acted upon. All stakeholders, including Governments, donors and the international humanitarian community, should get better at responding to early warning information. Actions should be taken which enable a swift scale up in the event of a crisis, but which will have no negative impact should the predictions prove wrong.

Clarification of roles at the international level for preparedness

23. There is recognition that the international community needs to develop a more systematic approach to emergency preparedness support aimed at Governments, regional organizations and humanitarian partners. While many international actors are involved in supporting the preparedness efforts of Governments, there is a need to clarify roles and responsibilities. There is currently no single agency which possesses a leadership role in this area. Humanitarian actors have an important part to play in supporting certain aspects of preparedness for emergency response mentioned above, thereby complementing the longer-term capacity-building efforts undertaken by development actors.

24. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee organizations have recognized the urgent need for stronger preparedness at all levels in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of emergency response. They have therefore set "building national capacity for preparedness" as one of their priority topics for 2011. The core issues being addressed include a call for action to strengthen global inter-agency coordination so as to provide better support to country efforts for preparedness capacity development, support country leadership and activities in priority countries, strengthen flexible and inclusive inter-agency coordination methods at the country level and advocate for adequate resources for preparedness.

Regional initiatives for response preparedness

25. Regional organizations and regional groupings of humanitarian partners, through their proximity and familiarity with the local situation, have a unique opportunity to contribute to a more effective response. A number of initiatives are being undertaken by humanitarian partners as well as regional organizations to support response preparedness at the regional level. The Risk, Emergency and Disaster Task Force Inter-Agency Working Group for Latin America and the

Caribbean (REDLAC), inspired by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and set up in 2004, is an example of effective collaboration. After the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, REDLAC members met within two hours and were the first personnel deployed to lead clusters, make assessments and deliver goods and services from pre-positioned stocks in Panama City. The 30 United Nations, Red Cross, Red Crescent and non-governmental organization members of REDLAC regularly come together with donors to exchange information, discuss best practices and plan together. Similarly, the Middle East and North Africa Group — an informal platform similar to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee — provides capacity-building services to the United Nations country teams and local and national partners in the region, fostering information sharing among partners on disaster-prone countries.

26. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has made progress in developing a regional framework for disaster management through the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. The Agreement governs regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction, response and recovery. The Australia-Indonesia Facility for Disaster Reduction illustrates the great potential of a united commitment to better prepare for and respond to natural disasters. This partnership involves collaboration on innovative scientific solutions and forward-looking analysis to build more effective disaster mitigation, preparedness and response regionally.

27. The United Nations supports the Southern African Development Community Disaster Risk Reduction Unit to undertake regional flood and cyclone preparedness. The areas of support have included contingency plan review and updates, development of assessment tools, simulation exercises and resource mobilization. This has ultimately led to a reduction in loss of lives, as Governments have implemented preparedness measures that include dissemination of early warning information and timely evacuation of people. In West Africa, the Strategic Partnership for Preparedness was implemented during 2010 as a pilot project with regional stakeholders. In the first pilot country, Ghana, the emergency preparedness and response capacity assessment of October 2010 led to revised United Nations Development Assistance Framework components, an action plan and a national simulation exercise. The United Nations also supports the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States through the organization of regional consultations on natural disaster preparedness.

Strengthening international networks and information exchange for response preparedness

28. The United Nations recognizes the utmost importance of strengthening response mechanisms and building resilience to disasters through increased partnership, cooperation and information exchange among national and international response actors. One recent example in this regard is the "International dialogue on strengthening partnership in disaster response: bridging national and international support", launched in collaboration with the Government of Switzerland and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and International Council of Voluntary Agencies, which will convene in October 2011. The United Nations also continues to support Governments through networks and inter-agency services such as the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, the international Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies, the United Nations

Disaster Assessment and Coordination teams or United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord).

29. In an effort to facilitate the delivery of international humanitarian assistance in case of a disaster, the United Nations is working to ensure the application of simplified customs procedures. In collaboration with the World Customs Organization, a model agreement has been designed to expedite the import and transit of relief consignments. So far six Governments have signed it. In 2010, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Customs Organization to reinforce the setting up and promotion of customs facilitation measures for relief consignments.

30. As recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/264, the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities has been discontinued. Alternative databases for specific topics have been implemented and are linked to several public websites of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The global mapping of emergency stockpiles, launched in October 2010, is one of the services which have replaced the Central Register and plays an important role in preparedness. It maintains lists of global relief stocks and creates mutual awareness of each actor's capacities by disseminating information that facilitates improved response ("who has what where").

B. Strengthening the transition from relief to development

31. The guiding principles on humanitarian assistance contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182 recognize the mutually reinforcing relationship between development and humanitarian assistance, through emergency assistance that supports recovery and development. The principles also recognize that economic growth and sustainable development are essential for preparedness against natural disasters and emergency response. However, despite considerable attention to the gap between humanitarian and development action and smooth transition, challenges prevail.

32. In the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, humanitarian action is critical in laying the foundations for recovery and development. However, stronger relationships must be forged with both national and development partners so that short-term objectives are aligned with longer-term goals and international efforts complement, rather than replace, local and national capacities. In order to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development activities, early joint strategic planning is critical to shape a shared understanding of the local context and to reach agreement of short-, medium- and long-term objectives, thereby guiding overall efforts.

33. Promoting self-reliance of affected communities is a prerequisite of sustained development. Humanitarian actors need to maximize opportunities to deliver assistance that supports communities and promotes sustainability, through the active participation of affected people and by building partnerships with local Governments and other actors, including non-governmental organizations and civil society. Social protection systems and safety nets are important tools for managing natural hazards, providing a platform for national preparedness and response, as well as building resilience among vulnerable communities.

34. Humanitarian assistance that promotes local livelihoods (in particular agricultural livelihoods), capacities and social services further supports sustainable recovery. This demands better linkages with commerce in order to stimulate economic activity and provide credit to facilitate recovery. Local procurement, cash-for-work schemes and microcredit initiatives can all assist in stimulating the local economy and promoting local livelihoods. Creating infrastructure for health and education also contributes to job creation and development. Cash-for-training initiatives which develop entrepreneurial skills also stimulate the economy while building capacity for income generation.

35. Efforts are ongoing to strengthen linkages between humanitarian and development action, and recent initiatives in Haiti and Pakistan demonstrate a greater commitment to ensure more sustainable humanitarian approaches. At the global level, the United Nations Development Group-Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs Working Group on Transition brings together humanitarian and development partners to develop global policy and practice in transition contexts, and efforts are under way to strengthen cooperation of development and humanitarian actors at the field level. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee recently published guidance for clusters (endorsed in July 2011) on better engagement with national authorities and an Inter-Agency Standing Committee reference group has been established to work with local authorities to address urban challenges. In Haiti concerted action has been taken by the clusters to strengthen engagement with national actors and eventually phase into national structures. In addition, the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities initiative (founded by a group of relief, development and media agencies) was launched in Haiti and Pakistan in order to provide local media services to communicate lifesaving information to affected people and to feed back their voices to influence the design and execution of relief and recovery efforts. Because the need to promote self-reliance and stimulate the local economy is well understood, cash payments have been provided instead of non-food items to communities in Haiti, Pakistan and most recently in the drought-affected Horn of Africa.

36. In order to support these efforts, the United Nations system, Member States and humanitarian actors can take steps to ensure that humanitarian planning is informed by recovery and longer-term development approaches through the involvement of development experts in strategic planning dialogue, reference to United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and national development plans, and existing-capacity and development-impact assessments. Steps can also be taken to ensure that financing for humanitarian activities, including through United Nations appeals processes and pooled funding arrangements, gives appropriate attention to projects that achieve humanitarian and long-term development objectives in a mutually supportive manner. The participation of national and development actors, such as international financial institutions and regional banks, non-governmental organizations, local and international corporate interests, as well as local communities, should be systematically incorporated into coordination mechanisms, at different levels. Donors can also assist in bridging the humanitarian-development funding gap through the provision of long-term but flexible funding and by allowing programmes to shift between development and emergency phases in response to the external context.

C. Humanitarian response in urban settings

37. The majority of the world's population currently lives in urban areas and by 2030 an estimated 59 per cent will be living in cities and towns. Over 90 per cent of this urban growth will be in the developing world. An estimated one third of all urban dwellers are chronically poor and live in precarious informal settlements and slums, without adequate water, sanitation, health, education and transportation services. These communities are especially vulnerable to natural hazards, as their coping mechanisms and resilience are already stressed. They are also highly vulnerable to food price volatility, as they are almost entirely dependent on markets for food. The 2010 joint United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)/World Health Organization report, entitled *Hidden Cities: Unmasking and Overcoming Health Inequities*, drew attention to the need for strengthening health emergency management capacities so as to reduce vulnerability and improve disaster responses in cities. The impact of climate change will be disproportionately high for urban dwellers, since 13 per cent of the world's urban population live in low-elevation coastal zones in many of the world's largest cities, especially in Asia. Environmental degradation and desertification are increasingly forcing the displacement of many poor households into under-served informal urban settlements.

38. Because cities are home to large and dense concentrations of populations, the potential impact of natural disasters can be enormous, both in terms of loss of life and economic assets. With rapid urbanization, the numbers of people at risk are growing dramatically. The most vulnerable are the 1 billion urban poor residing in rapidly growing, uncontrolled and densely populated informal settlements and slums in hazard-prone locations. The failure of urban authorities to regulate building standards and land-use planning exacerbate vulnerability and make the management of humanitarian crises in urban areas complex. The concentration of economic resources, health facilities, critical infrastructure and other social resources in cities also means that urban disasters can have disproportionately higher negative impacts on national economies and services.

39. The social and political complexity of urban areas calls for partnerships with local governments, the private sector and community-based organizations (including youth and women's networks) for disaster risk reduction, preparedness and emergency assistance. Access to densely populated urban areas is often difficult and conventional methods of needs assessment do not always adequately distinguish between the ongoing chronic needs of the urban poor and the more acute vulnerability provoked by a disaster.

40. In order to strengthen the ability of humanitarian actors to more effectively respond to emergencies in urban areas, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed its first strategy and action for meeting humanitarian challenges in urban areas, in November 2010. The strategy is built around six strategic objectives: develop operational strategies early-on, if not before a disaster, that ensure multi-stakeholder partnerships for enhanced coordination, impact and effectiveness of humanitarian interventions; strengthen technical surge capacity for urban-based emergencies; meet the gaps in humanitarian approaches and tools for urban areas; promote protection of vulnerable urban populations against violence and exploitation; restore livelihoods and economic opportunities, starting in the emergency phase; and build preparedness into humanitarian assistance policies linked to broader disaster risk reduction plans.

41. The strategy clearly recognizes that if disaster risk reduction and preparedness activities are to be fully effective, national implementation capacity has to be built or strengthened in most countries. However, in order to be accountable to affected local populations for saving lives and livelihoods in complex urban settings, disaster risk reduction and preparedness plans need to be re-scaled from the national level to the municipal level. Capacity-building is equally critical for municipal authorities and community organizations.

42. Inter-Agency Standing Committee partners are working with several national and municipal governments, disaster management institutions and civil society to develop at-risk country preparedness strategies as pilot activities linked to broader disaster risk reduction plans. Among the capacities that need to be strengthened are: hazard identification and urban risk mapping, community risk assessments linked to city and national disaster risk programmes, establishment of multi-stakeholder advisory forums, strengthening of connections and information exchange between local communities and local governments in planning and implementation of disaster risk reduction and preparedness activities; improvements in early warning systems; institutional arrangements for permanent disaster risk reduction management; and disaster risk reduction mainstreaming into local development planning, including urban planning. A number of initiatives are under way to address some of these issues. These include the cooperation between the UN-Habitat World Urban Campaign and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Resilient Cities Campaign to reinforce the Hyogo Framework and disaster risk reduction with local governments, and various initiatives of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Sub-Working Group on Preparedness.

V. Progress in strengthening humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters

A. Lessons learned on strengthening the coordination and response capacity when facing natural disasters of large magnitude

43. In 2010 the responses to the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan stretched the capacity of the humanitarian community and highlighted the importance of strong leadership and of a well coordinated response integrated with Government structures. Inter-agency real time evaluations found that while there has been progress, weak leadership caused coordination and response challenges. The sheer size of the responses, in terms of the number of actors and geographical reach, created unique coordination challenges that required flexible structures, strong analysis and experienced, dedicated cluster coordinators with information management support. These challenges once again demonstrated the need to immediately deploy the right staff with the right skills.

44. The inter-agency real time evaluations also highlighted the need to better involve local capacity and affected populations in relief efforts. During the response in Haiti, an innovative mechanism was set up to promote accountability towards affected populations. The Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities initiative brought together partners and experts in a collective effort to improve two-way communication between the humanitarian community and affected

populations. The recently revised Sphere Handbook (2011) also provides an important tool to help ensure that programme delivery meets the highest standards.[6]

45. In response to the lessons learned from various disasters, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee principals have committed to work in partnership in order to make quantifiable improvements to humanitarian coordination and response to large-scale emergencies. Every new major emergency response is reviewed to ensure that it has the required leadership. Where gaps in senior, experienced humanitarian leadership are identified, they will be addressed quickly. Options for ensuring better leadership and coordination also include convening the Inter-Agency Standing Committee at the highest level to discuss the response to a new crisis. The pools of available, experienced and competent humanitarian coordinators, cluster coordinators and other emergency managers and advisers are being expanded, and Inter-Agency Standing Committee organizations have flexible human resources arrangements that allow for their rapid deployment. Other examples include the work which is under way to refocus the responsibilities of cluster lead agencies and partners on achieving agreed results, define criteria for cluster participation and clarify the definition of provider of last resort. In this context, non-governmental organization consortiums are also determining the minimum requirements of organizations to be included as part of a cluster and in a humanitarian country team.

B. Humanitarian financing for disasters associated with natural hazards

46. Since June 2010, the United Nations and its partner organizations have issued flash appeals and emergency action plans in response to natural disasters in four countries. The Central Emergency Response Fund was the largest single source of revenue for three of these appeals, with contributions ranging from $1.2 million to $6.1 million, except for Pakistan, where $42 million was provided. Playing a complementary role to the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies allocated a total of $21.6 million in 2010 to national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in order to support their disaster response operations. Three quarters of those allocations were made as grants to cover the costs of small- or medium-scale operations, for which no emergency appeal had been launched.

47. Emergency Response Funds and Common Humanitarian Funds offered strategic value in delivering responses to natural disasters. The Emergency Response Fund in Pakistan provided over $34.6 million allocated for 3.8 million affected persons, and the Common Humanitarian Funds and Emergency Response Funds in East Africa and the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda) enabled speedy response to droughts and floods with $83 million. The unearmarked nature allows decision-making from field-level, where needs are best known and disbursements are quick.

48. In 2010 contributions from the private sector to the Central Emergency Response Fund rose to an all-time high of $4.4 million, owing in part to large-scale emergencies, such as the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods. The United Nations continues to further partnerships with the private sector.

[6] *The Sphere Project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response.*

49. While the United Nations has made significant progress in using country-based pooled funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund with increasing effectiveness, there is still no similar fund for preparedness measures. Funding for preparedness remains ad hoc and inconsistent, and innovative approaches need to be sought to ensure dedicated resources for response preparedness. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Humanitarian Financing Group is working to track funding for preparedness, including through existing funding mechanisms, with a view to improving the predictability and quality of preparedness funding. Moreover, contributions for early recovery activities are often delayed and limited, which threatens to reduce the impact of response efforts.

C. Strengthening evidence-based decision-making in humanitarian operations: needs assessment and analysis

50. Better coordinated and harmonized needs assessments are critical for improving aid effectiveness and accountability to beneficiaries, decision-making and funding. To this end, the United Nations and its partners, through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Needs Assessment Task Force, have focused on finalizing an operational framework consisting of guidance on coordinated assessments, key indicators, a joint assessment methodology and a platform to consolidate information. A pool and roster of assessment experts has been established, and capacities of both national and international partners have been built. These ongoing investments are intended to strengthen the level of preparedness and ability to underpin emergency responses and consolidated appeals processes with a robust evidence base.

51. The Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises describes key actions for coordinated assessments, roles and responsibilities and common principles, while underscoring the overall responsibility of national authorities. It recommends tailored assessment methodologies and proposes standard operating procedures. The Task Force also agreed on a standard menu of qualitative and quantitative indicators for each sector. The multi-cluster initial rapid assessment endeavours to provide an overview of needs of the affected population and response priorities for international support during the initial phase of an emergency. It allows stakeholders to reach a shared understanding of the humanitarian situation at the onset of an emergency. The humanitarian dashboard, a platform supporting the consolidation of humanitarian information and analysis, has been produced for four countries. Two additional dashboards are under development. By the end of 2011, the guidance and its tools will have been applied in at least four humanitarian emergencies and preparedness contexts. In parallel, recognizing the need to link needs assessments with preparedness efforts, the revision of the post-disaster needs assessment methodology is placing greater emphasis on integrating disaster risk reduction in disaster recovery.

D. Humanitarian principles and humanitarian access to populations affected by natural disasters

52. Humanitarian action should be conducted on the basis of need and in line with the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. National authorities have primary responsibility for providing

assistance and adequate protection to those affected by natural disasters. Member States are also urged to facilitate access to populations affected by disasters. In order to reach populations in need and provide timely assistance to populations affected by disaster, humanitarian access is essential. Unfortunately, the ability of humanitarian actors to access those populations continues to be jeopardized in many humanitarian crisis situations.

53. Most constraints on access are not deliberately obstructive and in many cases it is a combination of constraints, rather than a single factor, which renders access difficult. Disasters frequently cause widespread destruction of homes and public infrastructure, including roads. Identifying populations in need and delivering assistance to them effectively is often hampered by limited physical access to disaster areas and security considerations (in particular in the first weeks of the emergency). Other constraints include bureaucratic requirements for the entry of personnel and import of equipment and relief supplies, the diversion of aid, as well as interferences with the passage of personnel and goods and with the implementation of activities.

54. Achieving and maintaining access requires coordinated efforts and liaison with the relevant actors at all levels to establish acceptance for humanitarian actors and their work. Preparedness efforts can help reduce access constraints in the event of a natural disaster, for instance when they are addressed during contingency planning processes. Moreover, in order to assist States in preparing their legal and institutional arrangements for international disaster assistance, the United Nations and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies continue to promote the implementation of the guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance. The thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, in November 2011, will be an opportunity for the States parties to the Geneva Conventions to review their progress in implementing the guidelines and to devise strategies for accelerating their implementation, in particular in disaster-prone countries.

E. Displacement and protection in situations of natural disasters

55. Natural disasters displace more people than any other cause. In 2010 some 42 million people were forced from their homes as a result of sudden-onset natural disasters, according to a study by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.[7] Effective disaster risk reduction and preparedness are critical to help avert and minimize the scale, duration and impact of displacement. After the emergency stage of a disaster is over, efforts must also be devoted to finding durable solutions that facilitate voluntary, safe and dignified return or local integration. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has developed guidance to assist national authorities and humanitarian and development actors in their efforts to help internally displaced persons to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of disaster.[8]

56. In many natural disaster contexts, most recently in Haiti and Pakistan, experience has shown that disasters create new protection risks and compound

[7] *Displacement due to natural hazard-induced disasters*, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, June 2011.

[8] IASC framework on durable solutions for internally displaced persons, April 2010, available from www.brookings.edu/reports/2010/04_durable_solutions.aspx.

pre-existing vulnerabilities. Protection concerns that frequently arise include ensuring equal access to assistance, in particular for older persons, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons and other persons with special needs, including separated children, survivors of sexual violence and single-headed households. Addressing a lack of security, preventing and responding to gender-based violence, including sexual violence as well as such harmful coping mechanisms such as early/forced marriage, is equally crucial, as is the replacement of personal documentation (which is often needed to access essential services) and maintaining housing, land and property rights. Typical protection concerns following natural disasters also include the handling of mortal remains, the reunification of separated families and the prevention of child trafficking and illegal adoption. In addition, the psychosocial impact of natural disasters is substantial. Mitigating these risks or avoiding them altogether will require taking into account relevant protection guarantees in disaster response. In October 2010 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee adopted revised operational guidelines on the protection of persons in situations of natural disasters, to assist humanitarian organizations and national authorities in undertaking the essential task of incorporating protection in disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities.[9]

57. While protection concerns are often acute in natural disasters, to date the international community has lacked predictable and effective leadership and coordination on protection in such situations. In January 2011 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreed to pilot a new arrangement for designating a cluster lead agency for protection in such situations. Under this new arrangement, it is envisaged that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would assume the leadership role on the basis of a request by and the consent of the State concerned, and in the event the two other protection-mandated agencies (the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) are not already present with sufficient capacity and expertise to fulfil that role.

58. Humanitarian actors have sought to strengthen the protection response in natural disasters also by increasing the deployment, through protection standby mechanisms, of staff to assist in integrating protection in the response to disasters in several countries during the reporting period. In addition, the Global Protection Cluster Task Force on Natural Disasters has developed a training module for humanitarian staff on protection in natural disasters.

F. Strengthening gender mainstreaming

59. Mainstreaming gender in disaster risk management has been a priority of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender sub-working group during the reporting period. One aspect of this work has been the deployment of GenCap Gender Advisers in a regional capacity to southern Africa and the South Pacific. This is seen as a pilot initiative from which lessons will be drawn for wider dissemination. In southern Africa, efforts of the GenCap Gender Adviser are focused on four countries in the region (Comoros, Madagascar, Mozambique and Zambia) which are annually plagued by floods, cyclones and droughts. Simulation exercises and lessons learned

[9] IASC operational guidelines on the protection of persons in situations of natural disasters, January 2011, available from ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/Operational%20Guidelines.pdf.

from emergencies in the region brought to light that gender issues are regularly overlooked in disaster preparedness and response. The vulnerabilities and capacities of women and girls in particular are not always taken into consideration in national policies and plans, even if they are engaged at the community level.

60. Acknowledging this gap, the humanitarian country team of Mozambique, for instance, took the decision to mainstream gender in its 2012 contingency plan. In April 2011 members of the clusters were trained on the use of the "gender marker", a tool to improve humanitarian response by ensuring that projects designed in consolidated appeals processes and pooled funds fully take into account the different needs of women, girls, boys and men. Efforts are also under way to develop gender-sensitive tools to enable proper gender analyses. Once finalized, these tools will be disseminated to States members of the Southern African Development Community for in-country use in disaster risk reduction activities.

61. Similar efforts are under way to support gender mainstreaming in disaster risk management in the Pacific region, initially in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Pacific women are highly involved in local preparedness and initiatives for building disaster resilient communities. However, their roles in mitigating and preparing for disasters and in managing emergencies usually go unrecognized in formal disaster management processes and they tend to be excluded from planning relief distributions. In each of the five countries, gender equality networks have now been formed to facilitate participation.

G. Civil-military relations in natural disaster response

62. Continued efforts have been undertaken to further increase understanding of appropriate interaction between military actors and humanitarian organizations in preparedness and response to natural disasters. Whether national, international or United Nations forces, the military, with its unique capability, can play a significant role in supporting humanitarian disaster response operations. An extensive training and exercise programme covering humanitarian civil-military coordination (UN-CMCoord) continues to support Member States to enhance their preparedness and response capacity.

63. As illustrated by the example of the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake, a number of potential coordination challenges are often amplified as a result of bilateral foreign military assistance in response to the request of an affected State, such as maintaining the civilian character of humanitarian assistance. Member States that engage their military forces in support of humanitarian response are encouraged to liaise with humanitarian coordination mechanisms from the early stages of the emergency and at all levels to ensure best and coordinated use of key military capabilities.

64. The Haiti earthquake and Pakistan floods have further emphasized the need for a constant dialogue between humanitarian and military actors. Following the Haiti earthquake, and the identification of coordination gaps between humanitarian and international military actors, the humanitarian community has been developing country-specific guidelines on interaction between humanitarian organizations and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. This process has been critical to prepare for the 2011 hurricane season as well as possible cholera outbreaks. Member States are encouraged to continue supporting the development of country-

specific and, where applicable, regional humanitarian guidelines on civil-military coordination and their dissemination among their national forces.

65. The provision of military assets to support humanitarian action must take place in an appropriate, predictable and complementary manner so as to ensure that humanitarian needs can be addressed wherever they arise and in line with humanitarian principles. Internationally established guidelines, such as the "Oslo guidelines" on the use of foreign military and civil defence assets in disaster relief and the guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets to support United Nations humanitarian activities in complex emergencies ("MCDA guidelines") are designed to support such efforts. Military assets should only be deployed to address specific needs identified by the humanitarian community, as a last resort, respecting international guidelines and national guidance, and in support of humanitarian action. In 2011 the General Assembly adopted its resolution 65/307 on improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response.

H. The evolving role of technology in disaster response

66. Over the past few years, developments in the communications sector have transformed the way humanitarian actors communicate, use and process information. Recent developments will have a direct and immediate impact on disaster response operations and on the lives of communities vulnerable to natural hazards or affected by a disaster. Trends in this sector include increasing participation of affected populations in information-creation and sharing, the increasing use of mobile-based technology and social media, the need to manage an ever-increasing amount of information available and the increasing role of volunteer communities in creating information through "crowd-sourcing".[10] It is expected that mobile devices — in particular the smartphone — will have a significant impact on future humanitarian responses. Information technology can also play an important role in preparedness and for needs assessments, be it through the preparation of common operational datasets,[11] through community preparedness programmes, remote sensing, or sophisticated early warning systems which combine environmental monitoring with pre-existing data, and link humanitarian and civil defence actors with one another, with national and local governments, and with communities. They also allow for increased accountability towards affected populations. In moving forward with the use of technology in disaster response, promoting new and existing partnerships with the private sector will be important.

67. During the response to the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, for instance, it became clear that the volunteer and technical community could add value to the humanitarian response. Members of the affected community generated information using social media and widely available mobile technologies. However, the international humanitarian system was not well equipped to handle this information.

[10] Crowd-sourcing is the act of outsourcing tasks, traditionally performed by an employee or contractor, to a large group of people or community (a crowd), through an open call. The crowd is generally composed of those who are prepared to volunteer their time contributing content and solving problems.

[11] Common operational datasets are an Inter-Agency Standing Committee-agreed set of critical baseline datasets that are used to coordinate the work of humanitarian actors.

Around the world, volunteers helped aggregate, translate and plot this information on maps. While the use of technology can enable disaster-affected populations to transmit critical information, thereby increasing the speed, relevance and effectiveness of assistance provided, there are also challenges that persist, such as questions of privacy, relevance and verification of information, duplication and meeting the expectations which this interaction can create. Recognizing these trends, the United Nations commissioned a report which examines the current information landscape, requirements and possible opportunities and challenges, and provides recommendations.[12] Discussions in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Information Management Task Force are ongoing and are taking on board these recommendations.

VI. Recommendations

68. Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian partners are encouraged to recognize the critical importance of disaster preparedness and, in this respect, Member States are encouraged to increase support for the efforts by the United Nations and humanitarian partners to support strengthening the response capacity of local, regional and national actors, in particular capacities of first responders.

69. Member States are encouraged to increase their legal preparedness for effective disaster management by using the guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance, and to sign the model customs facilitation agreement to facilitate the import and transit of the relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel in the event of disasters and other emergencies.

70. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are called upon to continue efforts to ensure that early recovery is taken into account in humanitarian programming throughout all sectors and to ensure that development actors are included in strategic planning at an earlier stage.

71. Member States and the humanitarian community are strongly encouraged to take into consideration the unique consequences of natural disasters in urban areas and to ensure that they are adequately reflected in preparedness measures. Member States should encourage strong working partnerships between national and local governments, communities, private sector, civil society actors and other humanitarian actors to ensure effective risk management, contingency planning and preparedness for emergencies, including in urban areas.

72. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are urged to increase the level of human and financial resources provided to humanitarian and resident coordinators for leading and coordinating disaster preparedness and early recovery activities, and are encouraged to make use of such tools as the *Handbook for RCs* [resident coordinators] *and HCs* [humanitarian coordinators] *on Emergency Preparedness and Response*.

[12] Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. *Disaster Relief 2.0: The Future of Information Sharing in Humanitarian Emergencies*. United Nations Foundation and Vodafone Foundation Technology Partnership, 2011.

73. Member States are encouraged to provide timely, flexible and predictable funding for preparedness and early recovery, including through established humanitarian funding instruments.

74. Member States are also encouraged to continue providing early and multi-year commitments to the Central Emergency Response Fund and other United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian financing mechanisms, including the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in order to ensure predictable and timely access to resources for humanitarian emergencies that result from disasters associated with natural hazards. Private sector partners are also encouraged to contribute to the Central Emergency Response Fund and other established humanitarian financing mechanisms.

75. Safe, timely and unhindered access to vulnerable populations is a prerequisite for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. Member States are urged to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian personnel and supplies to communities affected by natural disasters.

76. Member States, the United Nations system and humanitarian, development and human rights partners are encouraged to identify protection concerns prior to, during and in the aftermath of a disaster, and to address such concerns systematically and in close collaboration with affected communities, local and national Governments, in preparedness, relief and recovery, recognizing that protection-related activities are as life-saving as any other sectoral activities in natural disaster situations.

77. Member States are encouraged to utilize the Inter-Agency Standing Committee operational guidelines on the protection of persons in situations of natural disasters in the implementation of contingency planning, disaster preparedness, response and recovery, and to work together by studying the experiences of disaster-prone countries and regions in order to reduce the scale, duration and impact of internal displacement in the event of natural disasters.

78. Member States are also encouraged to promote and incorporate the guiding principles on internal displacement in national legislation, policies and programmes in order to address the needs and rights of persons displaced by disasters.

79. Member States and humanitarian organizations are reminded of the need to maintain the fundamentally civilian character of emergency humanitarian assistance and are asked to ensure that the use of foreign military assets is appropriate, timely, unique in capability and availability, only at the request or with the consent of the affected State and coordinated with the emergency relief coordinator, as a last resort, and in conformity with international law and humanitarian principles, as well as internationally established guidelines, such as the "Oslo guidelines", the military and civil defence assets guidelines and regional and country/context-specific guidance, where present.

80. Member States are encouraged to support the efforts of the United Nations system, in coordination with other humanitarian actors, to strengthen the coordination and harmonization of needs assessments, including by supporting the building of international and national humanitarian assessment capacities.

81. Member States, the United Nations and humanitarian partners are encouraged to explore opportunities for further utilizing the potential of new technologies to improve the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian response and to

engage with the volunteer and technical community to make use of the variety of information available during emergencies.

82. Member States and the United Nations system are encouraged to apply a multi-hazard approach to their preparedness activities. In particular, due consideration should be given to secondary environmental hazards, especially those stemming from industrial and technological accidents. Greater attention should be given to the humanitarian component of environmental emergencies.

83. Member States and the United Nations system are also encouraged to support initiatives that address the different impacts of natural disasters on individuals and groups, and strengthen the involvement of women, men, boys and girls in preparedness and contingency planning actions, including through the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors, and to implement gender markers in humanitarian funding mechanisms in order to track funding allocations to gender and gender-based violence prevention and response programming.

84. Member States, the United Nations system and humanitarian actors are encouraged to take account of the principles and minimum standards outlined in the revised Sphere Project handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, in their humanitarian actions and disaster responses.

85. The United Nations and other humanitarian actors are called upon to further strengthen partnerships and collaboration with the private sector in areas including resource mobilization and in-kind assistance, as well as transfer of knowledge and capacities.

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Review of arrangements for funding and backstopping special political missions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 65/259 (sect. XIII, para. 7), the Secretary-General has reviewed the current funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions with a view to identifying possible alternatives. The review finds that, given the evolution of the role of these missions over the past decade, the funding arrangements for such missions and their associated requirements for backstopping are not adequate in three important respects:

(a) The biennial programme budget is not the optimal vehicle for funding special political missions;

(b) Start-up and expansion of special political missions are impeded by the lack of well-defined mechanisms to finance them between conferral of a mandate and approval of a budget;

(c) Much of the backstopping capacity that special political missions need to draw upon is provided by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Global Service Centre, which are not funded from the programme budget.

The report presents options to address the various aspects of the current situation. No single measure can address the full range of issues and specific problems may lend themselves to more than one solution. The alternatives identified in the report all aim to create a funding framework for special political missions that better accommodates the volatility of their resource requirements and operational characteristics than do current arrangements; facilitate transition between different forms of United Nations presences in support of peace, such as from a peacekeeping operation to a special political mission; fill the gap in mechanisms for funding

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mission start-up; and enhance effectiveness by eliminating barriers to backstopping capacity based on the funding stream.

The report puts forward for consideration by the General Assembly a number of options that could address these challenges to one degree or another.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
BINUB	United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi
BINUCA	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic
BNUB	United Nations Office in Burundi
BONUCA	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic
CNMC	Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
MICAH	International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti
MINUCI	United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire
MINURCA	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic
MINURCAT	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad
ONUB	United Nations Operation in Burundi
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMET	United Nations Mission in East Timor
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNIOGBIS	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
UNOA	United Nations Office in Angola
UNOB	United Nations Office in Burundi
UNOGBIS	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau
UNOMIG	United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNOTIL	United Nations Office in Timor-Leste
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa
UNPOS	United Nations Political Office for Somalia

UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
UNSCO	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UNSOA	United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia

I. Introduction

1. Over the past decade, a proliferation of political missions has assumed an important place in United Nations efforts towards the maintenance of international peace and security. The United Nations has increasingly come to utilize these mechanisms — collectively named "special political missions" and funded through the programme budget — for the delivery of mandates in a range of fields, including preventive diplomacy efforts through regionally or nationally based political offices; complex political engagement by missions working alongside multinational peacekeeping forces and supporting peace processes; justice mechanisms; expert groups that monitor and strengthen Security Council sanctions regimes; and integrated peacebuilding offices.

2. There are currently 31 special political missions. Their financial volume has expanded exponentially, as has the number of staff on the ground, which has grown to more than 4,000 civilians, most of whom are deployed in missions with multidimensional mandates and often in dangerous environments. While gaps in the arrangements for smaller field missions for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking were discerned as long ago as 1995, the vastly increased requirements of the missions have made the need to address these gaps more pressing.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to section XIII of General Assembly resolution 65/259, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to conduct a thorough review of the current funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions, with a view to identifying possible alternatives. The proposals presented in the report have been developed with the objectives of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of these missions; enhancing transparency and accountability; avoiding duplication; and facilitating oversight by the General Assembly of the budgets of the United Nations. These proposals are also in line with the priorities identified by the Secretary-General for 2011, which include improving the budget process to better manage resources, as well as to embrace innovation and increase the impact of United Nations operational activities.

4. Special political missions form part of a range of interventions and presences of varying configurations deployed by the United Nations in different circumstances to address threats to international peace and security. The other main grouping of such activities is peacekeeping operations. Different financial arrangements apply to each, reflecting their different character and facilitating the apportionment to Member States of the related costs on a different basis between the two types of activities. The analysis undertaken by the Secretariat concludes that the current funding arrangements present challenges in three important respects. First, the biennial programme budget does not well accommodate the dynamism of the life cycle, the unpredictable timing and the operational characteristics of special political missions and does not provide Secretariat backstopping resources that ebb and flow with mission needs. Special political missions may be added, or added to, in mid-cycle, including within an annual cycle, although the regular budget is biennial. These missions therefore have a considerable impact on the overall programme budget figure. Secondly, the practice of financing much of the capacity at Headquarters for backstopping through one funding source (peacekeeping) and generally limiting the use of that capacity to peacekeeping when it is increasingly also required for special political missions inhibits the optimal utilization of Secretariat capacity. Thirdly, current funding arrangements also do not have the flexibility to respond to the funding requirements that arise during mission start-up, expansion or transition.

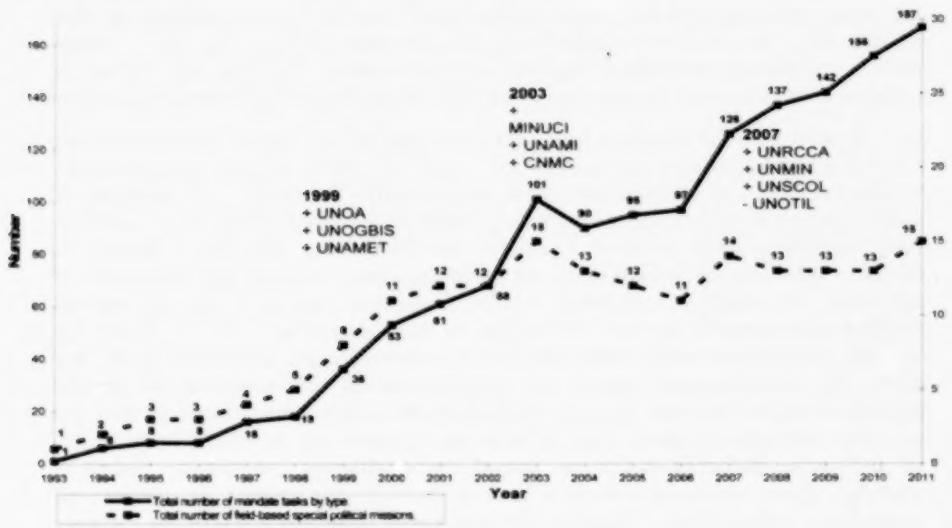
5. The present report puts forward options to change the current funding arrangements aimed at two fundamental purposes: to create a funding framework for special political missions that better accommodates the volatility and unpredictability of their resource requirements and operational characteristics than does the programme budget; and to enhance efficiency by eliminating barriers based on funding stream to access the backstopping that special political missions require.

II. Expanded roles and mandates

6. The recent history of field-based special political missions is generally understood to begin in 1993 with the creation of UNOB. At the outset, special political missions were assigned reporting and monitoring tasks but over the past decade their mandated roles have expanded. By 2000, when there were eight political missions in the field, the typical special political mission had, on average, four different core sets of mandated tasks, which were some combination of facilitating political processes, implementing peace agreements, coordinating United Nations activities in the country, and mobilizing international assistance and providing electoral assistance.

7. The number and range of mandated tasks have since changed dramatically. In 2003, a field-based special political mission mandate had an average of seven tasks. By 2010, half of such missions had mandates that contained 12 to 24 tasks.[1]

Figure I
Comparison of field-based special political missions and mandate tasks, 1993-2011



Note: For the years that had a significant increase in the total number of mandates, the field-based special political missions added that year have been indicated on the graph.

[1] UNAMA (23), UNPOS (20), UNIOGBIS (17), UNIPSIL (17), UNAMI (15), UNOWA (15) and BINUCA (12).

8. BONUCA, which was established in 2000, is illustrative of a special political mission with a multidimensional mandate. Following on from the preceding peacekeeping operation, MINURCA, the mandate of BONUCA in 2001 included technical assistance to the national police in addition to expanding its work on political facilitation, mediation and human rights. BONUCA subsequently made the transition to an integrated peacebuilding office, BINUCA, with a comparable list of tasks. The missions in Sierra Leone (transitioning from a peacekeeping operation) and Guinea-Bissau also received a greater number and diversity of mandated tasks over time. In Guinea-Bissau, UNOGBIS was created in 1999 with two mandated tasks. Its successor, the integrated peacebuilding office UNIOGBIS, which was established in 2010, has 17 tasks.

9. In addition to the unique set of tasks within their individual mandates, special political missions also are subject to a range of thematic mandates, which require enhanced support and backstopping, in particular those concerning women and peace and security, sexual violence and conflict, and children and armed conflict. Overall, the breadth of the tasks that any individual special political mission must carry out creates the requirement for a wide range of specialized expertise, either within the mission itself or through a backstopping arrangement with a provider outside the mission.

III. Funding arrangements for special political missions

10. In introducing the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 to the Fifth Committee, the Secretary-General stated that he thought it necessary to put in place an alternate funding mechanism for special political missions (see A/C.5/64/SR.10, para. 8). While these missions have never corresponded ideally with the concept of the programme budget, the growth in their number, size and operational scope in recent years has cast this misalignment into sharper relief.

11. The budgetary proposals for special political missions for 2011 contained in A/65/328 and Add.1-7 and Add.1/Corr.1 and 2, Add.2/Corr.1, Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.6/Corr.1 provide for 30 such missions, given the discontinuation of UNMIN. For the purpose of budget presentation, special political missions have been grouped in recent years into three clusters, with two larger assistance missions (UNAMA and UNAMI) presented separately.

12. Fifteen special political missions are field-based and account for about 94 per cent of the resources provided for all special political missions. Beyond UNAMA and UNAMI, there are 13 other field-based special political missions, including four regional political offices, four integrated peacebuilding offices and other political initiatives. In addition to activities based in the field, there are an array of other special initiatives for peace and security that include special and personal envoys and sanctions groups and monitoring panels. These activities have been grouped into clusters I and II in budget presentations.

13. The inclusion of special political missions in the programme budget has progressively affected the programme budget process by situating requirements for those missions in the context of the negotiation of a total budget envelope, placing pressure on other budgetary requirements. Whether it is appropriate to consider resource requirements for these non-perennial aspects of the United Nations peace and security architecture in the context of the programme budget merits

consideration. The initial appropriation for a biennial programme budget has rarely, if ever, reflected the full biennial requirement for special political missions. There are often significant additional requirements for revised appropriations when the second year of mission resource requirements is factored in. In an environment where the overall level of the programme budget is a key factor, the second year of mission requirements which had not been provided for in the first instance should not be considered as off-cycle add-ons to the approved programme budget.

14. Furthermore, the volatility of mission resource requirements based on shifting mandates is difficult to reconcile with a programme budget process designed around predictability. The establishment of an outline of the programme budget and a contingency fund under General Assembly resolution 41/213 and the annex to Assembly resolution 42/211 reflected the desire of Member States to know at the outset of the biennium the level of resources that would be required during that biennium (see A/C.5/51/57, para. 24). While the more systematic integration of mission requirements in the proposed programme budgets consequent to resolution 53/206 enhanced budget transparency and simplified funding procedures, it did not solve the problem of predictability and volatility. The provision for special political missions has expanded, from an initial appropriation of $86 million in the 2000-2001 programme budget to a revised appropriation of $1.2 billion in the 2010-2011 programme budget. The share of the budget represented by these missions has also increased significantly, from 6 per cent in the 2000-2001 programme budget to over 20 per cent in the 2010-2011 programme budget. From the 2002-2003 biennium onwards, a pattern of significant changes within a biennium is evident, with resource requirements increasing from 50 to 100 per cent from the initial to the revised appropriation. The second performance report for the programme budget continues to be largely dominated by the volatile requirements of special political missions.

15. Although part of the programme budget, special political missions are budgeted on the basis of the mandate and requirements of the mission, and do not follow the programme planning and budgeting cycle as they may be approved at any time of the year. The biennial programme budget arrangements make it very difficult to adjust capacity for Headquarters backstopping, because while new missions may be mandated, programme budget staff capacity at Headquarters is very difficult to change outside the regular budget cycle. In terms of resource planning, the overall provision for political missions for the next biennium in the budget outline is generally based on the overall appropriation for ongoing missions that are anticipated to continue into the following biennium.

16. The present financial calendar for the programme budget is not optimal. In practice, an annual financial process is made to fit into a biennial framework. The January to December financial year reflects the requirements of the programme budget. While the calendar year arrangement has proven serviceable, given the increasing reliance of the special political missions on backstopping services obtained from providers that are funded through peacekeeping assessments, which follow a July to June cycle, advantages would accrue from alignment of the financial year for special political missions (January to December) with that of peacekeeping operations (July-June). This would provide a comprehensive global view of all backstopping requirements, open opportunities for further efficiency gains through the global field support strategy and ease the administrative aspects of transition from peacekeeping operations to special political missions, or vice versa.

This also would strengthen oversight by the General Assembly by facilitating its consideration of all interrelated cross-cutting issues.

17. The expenditure classification under the programme budget is not fully aligned with the expenditure classification for peacekeeping operations, which better reflects the requirements of field operations. While not an issue when such missions largely involved special envoys and travel and conference costs, the higher levels of field-based special political mission activity have made more apparent the limitations of the programme budget.

18. **Given the foregoing demonstration that the Organization's current approach to funding special political missions is not adequate, the General Assembly may wish to consider the alternative of establishing a special and separate account for the funding of special political missions that would be budgeted, funded and reported upon on an annual basis with a financial period of 1 July to 30 June. This approach would increase transparency and solve the problems described in paragraphs 13 to 17.**

19. Should the General Assembly wish to establish a special, separate account and adopt the proposed change in the financial calendar for special political missions, the following steps by the Assembly would produce an orderly transition to that alternative funding arrangement:

(a) Appropriate and assess within the framework of the programme budget the financial requirements for the period 1 January to 30 June 2012;

(b) Establish the special account effective 1 July 2012 and assess for it the portion of the already approved programme budget that is needed by the special political missions for the period 1 July to 31 December 2012;

(c) Receive and consider budgetary proposals for special political missions for the period 1 January to 30 June 2013 during the main part of its sixty-seventh session;

(d) Receive and consider budgets for special political missions for the new financial period July 2013 to June 2014 at its second resumed sixty-seventh session.

20. **Another option could be to improve transparency in the budget presentation for special political missions by funding these operations under a totally distinct section of the programme budget. This would involve segregating special political missions from the resources of the Department of Political Affairs and creating a new budget section exclusively for these missions. Resource requirements for the missions would be put forward annually under the new budget section. While this would also increase transparency, it would not fully address the problems identified by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 13 to 17.**

Transitions to and from special political missions

21. Given the variety of arenas in which special political missions now operate, and of the mandates to which they work, the United Nations system needs to contend with transitions between the various forms of United Nations engagement. Transitions between peacekeeping operations and special political missions are not uncommon. Such transitions to political missions have taken place, inter alia, in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone and Tajikistan. In

Timor-Leste and Liberia, transitions were reversed and peacekeeping operations were redeployed. The present funding and backstopping arrangements do not facilitate such transitions.

22. The distinction between the funding arrangements for peacekeeping and political missions is evident in the shrinking of resources and backstopping capacity, and the consequent risk of disruption to mandate implementation, that can ensue when a peacekeeping operation draws down and is replaced by a follow-on, field-based political mission. As noted in General Assembly resolution 64/269, careful planning and phasing of such transitions are clearly needed to avoid too precipitous a fall-off of capacity. The inability to scale up backstopping capacity as a peacekeeping operation transitions to a special political mission could have the perverse effect of delaying a transition for fear that the new mission would not have the support it requires. In addition, current arrangements impede the rational redistribution of capacity within the Secretariat to support missions in transition, as lead departments change. For example, staff in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations employed against posts funded from the support account would normally not be available to assist in backstopping the follow-on political mission because of limitations placed on the use of support account resources, based on Assembly resolution 61/279 and subsequent resolutions on the support account. This has a particular effect on the continuity of backstopping in areas such as police reform, disarmament and demobilization, and security sector reform.

Mission start-up and expansion

23. Special political missions lack well-defined and accessible mechanisms to finance mission start-up and expansion, pending the approval of a budget. Currently, advance funding for the launch or expansion of special political missions is available only through the envelope of the existing overall special political mission budget or through the Secretary-General's funding for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses of up to $8 million as he certifies relating to peace and security or up to $10 million per decision of the Security Council with the concurrence of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. This means that there is no independent, dedicated cash-flow mechanism to enable rapid response.

24. For example, the mandates for the integrated peacebuilding offices in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and the Central African Republic (BINUCA) were approved in mid-2009, involving in both cases a significant scaling up of presence. As their budgets — each in the range of $18 million to $19 million annually — would not be considered by the General Assembly until the end of the year, to prepare for mission start-up, they had to rely on unplanned, unexpended balances in the overall provision for special political missions for that biennium. But as such balances are not generally known until late in the year, significant delays resulted. Providing for the expansion of an existing or start-up of a new political mission should not have to depend on other missions underspending their budgets.

25. One mechanism used for financing mission start-up is the authority of the Secretary-General, provided most recently in General Assembly resolution 64/246 for the biennium 2010-2011, to enter into commitments for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses related to peace and security in the amount of up to $8 million a year, or up to $10 million with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for each prior decision of

the Security Council. While this mechanism enables the Secretary-General to initiate actions that respond to emerging threats to international peace and security, it is not well-suited to the start-up or expansion of special political missions that have already been mandated. UNAMA, for example, which had significant expansions approved by the Security Council in March of 2008 and 2009, had to wait for resources for nine months pending consideration of a budget. With special political missions having annual budgets as high as $275 million a year, a cash-flow mechanism to enable rapid response during the start-up or the expansion of a mandated mission is required. This is precisely the purpose of the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund, as described in financial regulation 4.5 of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, except that its use is confined to peacekeeping operations. Such mechanisms for interim funding are valuable means of reconciling the need for oversight by the Assembly with the need to commence mandated work in fast-changing conflict and post-conflict environments.

26. Also related to the start-up of political missions is their access to the strategic deployment stocks. When the strategic deployment stocks were established, all drawdowns had to be paid for in advance. This put missions for which a commitment authority or budget did not yet exist at a disadvantage. In its resolution 64/269, the General Assembly changed this with respect to peacekeeping operations, by authorizing commitments of up to $50 million from the strategic deployment stocks, with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee, with reimbursement to be made after the receipt of the appropriation. It would help the start-up of special political missions to be permitted to draw on the strategic deployment stocks on the same basis.

27. **Given the foregoing demonstration that the Organization's current approach to funding start-up, expansion and transition activities of special political missions is inadequate, the Secretary-General offers the following options that would improve performance:**

(a) **Option 1. Authorize special political missions to access the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund on the same basis as peacekeeping operations. This is a proven mechanism to address cash-flow requirements during the start-up or expansion phase of a mission and therefore will solve the problem described above;**

(b) **Option 2. Increase the discretion of the Secretary-General within the programme budget for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses from the current $10 million to $50 million, with the concurrence of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. This option uses an existing mechanism to solve the problem described above.**

28. **In addition, and irrespective of the options presented in the preceding paragraphs, special political missions could be authorized to access strategic deployment stocks on the same basis as peacekeeping operations, extending the provisions of General Assembly resolution 64/269 concerning access to and reimbursement of the stocks to be applicable to special political missions. This option would allow special political missions to draw upon strategic deployment stocks in advance of the corresponding budget appropriation.**

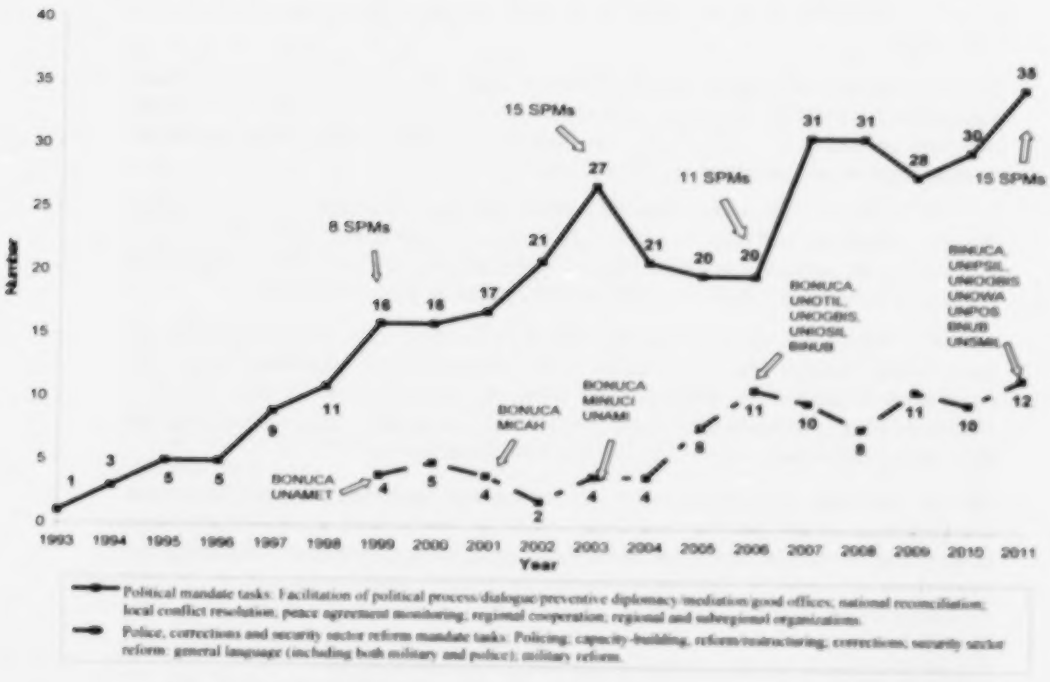
IV. Backstopping of special political missions

29. The Department of Political Affairs leads 27 of the existing 31 special political missions. This includes all field-based special political missions, with the exception of UNAMA, which is led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The multifaceted substantive mandates of special political missions, especially those in the field, require complex Headquarters backstopping for planning, direction and substantive support. The report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/64/349) described what such backstopping entails.

30. The past five years have seen a tripling of the mandated tasks related to the political work of the missions, including the facilitation of political processes, dialogue and reconciliation, preventive diplomacy, good offices, mediation, support to peace processes and peace agreement monitoring and implementation, and more interaction with and support to regional and subregional organizations.

Figure II

Number of mandated tasks related to political processes and to policing, corrections and security sector reform in field-based special political missions, 1993-2011


Number
Year
8 SPMs
15 SPMs
11 SPMs
15 SPMs
BONUCA, UNAMET
BONUCA, MICAH
BONUCA, MINUCI, UNAMI
BONUCA, UNOTIL, UNOGBIS, UNIOSIL, BINUB
BINUCA, UNIPSIL, UNIOGBIS, UNOWA, UNPOS, BINUB, UNSMIL
Political mandate tasks: Facilitation of political process/dialogue/preventive diplomacy/mediation/good offices, national reconciliation, local conflict resolution, peace agreement monitoring, regional cooperation, regional and subregional organizations.
Police, corrections and security sector reform mandate tasks: Policing, capacity-building, reform/restructuring, corrections, security sector reform, general language (including both military and police), military reform.

31. More special political missions have also generated a corresponding demand for increased political backstopping in areas such as demands for reporting and providing support to the Security Council; increased demand for a United Nations

role in relevant contact groups, groups of friends and regional organizations; the provision of leadership and coordination of the new United Nations integration agenda applied in Headquarters and the field for assessment, planning and mandate implementation across all country-based special political missions; and demand for more conflict analysis and political analysis from new intergovernmental bodies such as the Peacebuilding Commission, which it is the responsibility of the Department of Political Affairs to provide. As the Department of Political Affairs has not had the possibility of drawing on the support account to build or enter into contracts for capacity in relation to mission needs, and as the programme budget does not readily adapt to short-term changes in Headquarters staffing needs, the Department has had to fill capacity gaps by undermining the coverage of other countries and regions, by attempting to mobilize extrabudgetary resources, and by taking other ad hoc measures. Not only does the Department not have access to a flexible mechanism to respond to the changing requirements of missions, it is the only Department in the Secretariat with significant servicing responsibilities for activities in peacekeeping operations (electoral assistance and mediation support) that does not have access to the support account to meet variable capacity requirements.

32. With respect to administrative backstopping at Headquarters, the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs provides administrative support for 13 of the 17 missions in clusters I and II and the Department of Field Support provides logistical and administrative backstopping support to the 15 special political missions based in the field. The table contained in the annex to the present report sets out the responsibilities for overall leadership and administrative support of these missions and initiatives.

33. For Headquarters-based missions, the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for Disarmament Affairs provide support in finance and budget, human resources, information and communications technology and logistics. The Office for Disarmament Affairs supports one mission, and the number of special political missions the Department of Political Affairs supports has increased from six in 2004 to 13 in 2011. Since 2008, one new sanctions and monitoring panel has been established every year, each time with 10 to 12 personnel, leading to an increase in the total number of personnel to be administered by the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs from 70 to 113 (an increase of 61 per cent). The Executive Office is also a resource for the Department's regional desks that lead field-based special political missions.

34. For field-based missions, there is a correlation between the demand for Headquarters administrative and logistical backstopping and the size and capacity of the mission support structures. While it may seem counter-intuitive, the demands on Headquarters can be greater for small political missions, because their lack of support structures and delegations of authority requires that Headquarters provide the necessary service.

35. UNAMI and UNAMA possess internal support structures and related delegations of authority similar to small- to medium-sized peacekeeping operations. The support structures of the integrated peacebuilding offices may lack the specialization for more complex tasks, and thus support is provided from Headquarters. The political offices are very highly reliant on centralized support from Headquarters in all areas of administration and logistics. Because smaller

field-based special political missions generally have less depth in their support structures, the staffing capacity they do receive needs to be senior and experienced.

36. The creation of the Department of Field Support, with responsibility for supporting the political missions as well as peacekeeping operations, has strengthened the framework for administrative and logistical backstopping, while offering the opportunity for economies of scale in the delivery of services. The further development of the global field support strategy offers opportunities for the Organization to move from a mission-specific, "siloed" approach to field support, to an integrated business model that improves support to field-based missions through process re-engineering and economies of scale that target service improvements globally rather than through a mission-centric, stovepipe approach.

37. The Department of Political Affairs/Department of Field Support service level agreement, which came into effect on 15 December 2010, addresses Department of Field Support support to Department of Political Affairs-led field missions in all phases of a mission life cycle. The Department of Field Support designates a focal point for each field-based political mission to serve as a principal point of contact for the Department of Political Affairs; it will also undertake in the course of the coming year an examination of the common features of different types of field-based political missions to facilitate the planning and provision of support requirements in the future.

38. A critical feature of the services delivered by the Department of Field Support on the full range of support issues is assistance to the Department of Political Affairs in developing the mission support plan. Department of Field Support divisions at Headquarters typically backstop field-based special political missions in accordance with their terms of reference. The Department of Field Support also backstops through functions discharged at the Global Service Centre.[2] The backstopping services can be multimodal: depending on the requirements and circumstances of the mission, backstopping might be arranged through the country team, on a mission-to-mission basis, and through services provided by the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe, Uganda, and the Global Service Centre.

39. Other departments also discharge important backstopping functions. For the Department of Management, backstopping entails the full array of administrative services covering procurement, financial management and human resource functions.

40. The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts supports special political missions in the areas of budget preparation, presentation to legislative bodies and budget implementation, and provides all the required accounting and insurance functions, payroll and income tax administration for international staff as well as global treasury and banking services. Under the supervision of the Office of Central Support Services, the Procurement Division at Headquarters undertakes procurement activities, provides advisory support for field procurement within the authority of field-based missions, and develops policies and procedures for procurement at Headquarters, field-based missions and offices away from Headquarters. It also develops training modules and oversees the delivery of procurement-related training. The Procurement Division also prepares and

[2] The Global Service Centre includes the premises and facilities of the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy, and the United Nations Support Base at Valencia, Spain.

administers contracts for the procurement of goods and service. The Office of Human Resources Management provides human resources support and services to the Headquarters-based special political missions under the authority of the Department of Political Affairs. For field-based special political missions, authority is delegated to the Department of Field Support, which is the first point of contact and provider of services. However, the Office of Human Resources Management provides significant backstopping support in the areas of administration of entitlements, recruitment and talent management, medical services and central human resources policy direction directly related to special political missions, an example of which is the recent harmonization of conditions of service for field staff.

41. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducts internal audits, inspections and evaluations of special political missions based on risk assessment. OIOS also investigates reports of possible misconduct of staff serving in special political missions. In addition to the resources deployed for oversight activities from Headquarters, OIOS maintains resident auditors at UNAMA and UNAMI.

42. The Office of Legal Affairs provides a full array of legal services to special political missions in respect of both substantive and support-related issues. In particular, the Office drafts and negotiates agreements, including the status-of-mission agreements and supplementary arrangements and memorandums of understanding with Member States and international and non-governmental organizations. The Office reviews the rules of engagement and other standard operating procedures. It advises on a broad range of international legal issues, including interpretation of Security Council mandates, application and enforcement of status-of-mission agreement provisions, privileges and immunities, safety and security, and humanitarian law. The Office also advises on special political mission institutional and cooperative arrangements, logistical support arrangements, procurement activities and contracting requirements, the resolution of related disputes, and personnel and administrative issues, including conduct and discipline matters, and issues arising from the United Nations system of administration of justice.

V. Funding of backstopping

43. The examination by oversight bodies and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in recent years of the adequacy of arrangements for the backstopping of special political missions has drawn attention to a variety of issues that required attention, beyond resources and funding. Recurring themes have included the need to abate the risk of duplication or gaps through a clear definition of the responsibilities of the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a clear understanding of the services the Department of Field Support should provide, and improved systems for ensuring adequate and predictable mission planning, start-up and backstopping. The significant progress made to date in improving the institutional arrangements includes:

(a) Establishment of the Department of Field Support, with a mandate to support field-based special political missions as well as peacekeeping operations;

(b) Issuance of updated Secretary-General's bulletins on the organization and responsibilities of the Departments of Political Affairs, Peacekeeping Operations

and Field Support (ST/SGB/2009/13, ST/SGB/2010/1 and ST/SGB/2010/2, respectively);

(c) Completion of a service level agreement between the Department of Field Support and the Department of Political Affairs;

(d) Development by the Department of Political Affairs of standard operating procedures and guidelines for backstopping of special political missions;

(e) Development of mechanisms to apply the integration principle of United Nations efforts in post-conflict situations, including by applying the integrated planning process, leading Headquarters task forces, and developing supporting integrated strategic frameworks for Department of Political Affairs-led field-based missions and the United Nations country team;

(f) Adoption of the global field support strategy by the General Assembly;

(g) Development of guidance to support more effective political mission start-up and transition;

(h) Articulation of the responsibility and accountability of the regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs, in addition to their ongoing, broad political affairs tasks, for backstopping political missions, through, inter alia, the inclusion of performance indicators in budgets.

44. While progress has been made in defining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, and developing improved tools for planning and guiding missions, deficient funding arrangements for backstopping continue to inhibit the development of a predictable platform for backstopping, reduce the speed and effectiveness of response, and limit the utilization of specialized and expert capacities already available in the Secretariat to serve as global service providers available to special political missions and peacekeeping operations. Two distinct but interrelated issues are relevant.

45. The first is the issue of resources for Headquarters backstopping by the Department of Political Affairs and other departments. The absence of sufficient provision for substantive and administrative backstopping has been a strain on the Department and other departments, a matter which the Secretary-General has referred to in the past. To develop a better appreciation of backstopping capacity issues, the Secretary-General initiated measures to estimate the resources currently devoted to backstopping all special political missions in all departments and offices. While that exercise points to shortfalls in backstopping capacity in certain areas, the findings are considered preliminary. It would in any case be premature to assess capacity requirements without first addressing the flaws in the financing arrangements for backstopping, which foster gaps, duplication, inefficiency and non-transparent practices in relation to accountability to the General Assembly.

46. The second issue centres on the fact that special political missions do not have access to the backstopping services financed through the support account. This means that it is not straightforward for all the relevant capacities in the United Nations, irrespective of funding sources, to provide needed support and backstopping for special political missions in a transparent and regular manner. A means needs to be found to enable all the relevant capacities in the United Nations, irrespective of funding sources, to provide the needed support and backstopping for special political missions. The report of the Secretary-General on the

implementation of General Assembly resolution 63/261 (A/65/161 and Corr.1) indicated the need for field missions led by the Department of Political Affairs to access more easily the support and specialist capacity that is available in the United Nations. The financing arrangements for backstopping are central to addressing that issue.

47. The financial architecture for the backstopping of special political missions does not support a seamless approach to backstopping. Current arrangements have the effect of defining access to services on the basis of funding source, thereby creating incentives either to obscure the operational realities, to replicate existing capacities, or to establish administratively burdensome cost recovery procedures for mobilizing the requisite expertise.

48. The problem rests in the differences in and conditions governing the access to funding sources. While funded by the programme budget, field-based special political missions require administrative and logistical support from the Department of Field Support, as well as substantive support from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, notably by the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, which is called upon to support special political missions that are mandated to support police reform, drawing on the Police Division and its standing police capacity (as in the cases of UNAMI, UNIPSIL, UNOWA, BNUB, UNPOS, UNIOGBIS and BONUCA), security sector reform, disarmament and demobilization, mine action and functions related to justice and criminal law; by the Office of Operations, which leads UNAMA; and sometimes by the Office of Military Affairs. Trends in the growth of the related mandates are reflected in figure II, listing the special political missions responsible for those mandates. At the same time, the Department of Political Affairs supports electoral and mediation activities in peacekeeping operations, without access to resources funded from the support account.

49. The capacities of the Department of Field Support and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are, overwhelmingly, funded by the support account for peacekeeping operations, at 92 and 93 per cent respectively. Within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, of the 150 posts and positions in the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, only the leadership cell is funded in the programme budget (about 98 per cent of the capacity of the Office is funded from the support account) and a significant portion of the Mine Action Service posts are funded from voluntary contributions. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/279 and all subsequent resolutions on the peacekeeping support account, stressed that the support account is to be used for the sole purpose of financing the resource requirements for backstopping and supporting peacekeeping operations at Headquarters, and that any change in this limitation requires the prior approval of the Assembly. As a practical matter, the issue has proven less clear cut. For example, the Department of Field Support has from the outset been expected to support special political missions and cannot do so without drawing on its capacity that is funded from the support account.

50. The review of resources utilized to backstop special political missions indicates an appreciable draw on capacity that is funded from the support account. As the mandates of special political missions may increasingly require many of the same types of backstopping expertise that peacekeeping operations require, current arrangements provide only three alternatives: either to extend inadequate support; or

not to extend support; or to create costly, duplicative capacities. The Secretary-General therefore now believes it is necessary, in the interests of efficiency, transparency and his own accountability to the General Assembly for the effective stewardship of resources in accordance with mandates, to cease defining access to services by funding stream. Institutional coherence and cost-effectiveness require that the Secretariat should leverage its centres of expertise in the good interests of the Organization. In principle, all field-based special political missions should have access to the full range of capacities extant within the Secretariat.

51. The following approaches would provide the required access:

(a) **Option 1. Make the support account available to all departments and offices to fund their variable backstopping requirements in relation to the field-based special political missions and confirm the responsibility to support special political missions, while maintaining the existing arrangements for the financing of the support account and the Global Service Centre. This approach would solve the problems with special political mission backstopping described in the present report;**

(b) **Option 2. Presuming that the General Assembly decides to establish a special and separate account for special political missions as suggested in paragraph 18 above, use that account to fund the support account and the Global Service Centre on a pro rata basis in line with the share of special political missions of the total backstopping requirements for both peacekeeping operations and special political missions. This approach would also solve the problems with special political mission backstopping.** Based on the timetable for transition outlined in paragraph 19 above, the envisaged formula for sharing the costs of the support account and of the Global Service Centre between the special account for special political missions and peacekeeping operations would come fully into effect for the 2013-2014 biennium, as that would be the first time the budgets for both peacekeeping operations and special political missions would be considered and appropriated for a full year at the same time. As a transitional step, the formula for sharing the costs for the 2012-2013 biennium would be applied to the six months of special political mission resources that are designated for the special account at the time the support account and the budget for the United Nations Logistics Base, which funds the Global Service Centre budgets for the 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 financial period, are approved;

(c) **Option 3. Authorize the charging of variable headquarters backstopping requirements to special political mission budgets. This would facilitate access, especially for departments and offices funded primarily from the programme budget, to variable capacity in response to the ebb and flow of special political mission needs. This would, however, make the distinction between the funding of the mission and the funding of Headquarters capacity, less clear;**

(d) **Option 4. Include special political mission variable backstopping requirements within the support account and the capacity of the Global Service Centre. This approach would solve the problems with special political mission backstopping described in the present report. It would require an annual midyear additional appropriation for the programme budget to reflect the share of the special political missions of the backstopping services provided through the support account and by the Global Service Centre.**

52. The table below illustrates what the contribution of the special political missions would be to the cost of the support account and the Global Service Centre for a full year, based on the approved budgets for special political missions for 2011 and peacekeeping operation appropriations for the period 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011.

Notional special political mission contribution to the support account and the Global Service Centre

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Peacekeeping operation appropriations, 2010-2011	7 391 633
Budget, special political missions, 2011	631 162
Total, peacekeeping operations and special political missions	**8 022 795**
Special political mission share	7.86 per cent
Support account	363 811
Special political mission support account share	28 595
Global Service Centre	68 179
Special political mission Global Service Centre share	5 359

VI. Implementation arrangements

53. Some of the proposals made in the present report imply changes to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. As it will be necessary for the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session to consider revised financial regulations and rules in connection with the introduction of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, revisions necessitated by the adoption of one or more of the preceding options could be presented in that comprehensive context.

VII. Conclusions

54. Special political missions are important vehicles for the work of the United Nations in support of international peace and security. Significant measures have been taken in recent years to place the institutional arrangements for these missions on a stronger footing, but current funding arrangements are deficient because they do not provide for timely mission start-up or expansion. The funding arrangements for Headquarters backstopping have two important gaps. One is that much of the existing capacity needed to backstop special political missions is funded from the support account, which is generally restricted to the support of peacekeeping operations. A second element is that the biennial programme budget does not readily adapt to the variable backstopping capacity needs that result from the ebb and flow of special political mission activities.

55. The alternative funding arrangements set out in the present report aim to create a more effective budgetary framework for special political missions and more cost-effective and transparent arrangements for Headquarters backstopping. Alternatively, special political missions and their backstopping requirements could continue to be financed through the arrangements presently utilized. Or, in order to

avoid defining access to Headquarters backstopping services by funding stream, the support account could provide explicitly for the needs of special political missions, with the programme budget contributing to the support account on a pro rata basis. Or, a separate account for special political missions could be established. Similarly, to facilitate start-ups and transitions, the Secretary-General could have a larger commitment authority or special political missions could draw upon the peacekeeping reserve fund and/or the strategic deployment stocks.

VIII. Actions for the General Assembly

56. **The General Assembly is requested to consider the findings of the review and the alternative approaches advanced by the Secretary-General in the report to address the challenges and shortcomings in the current mechanisms for financing and backstopping special political missions.**

Annex

Special political missions

		Establishing decision	*Based in: central and sub-offices, and liaison*[a]	*2011 staff*[b]	*2011 budget (Thousands of United States dollars)*	*Lead department/ admin. support*	*Neighbouring and predecessor missions*
Cluster I							
1.	Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Cyprus	S/1997/321 (open mandate)	Nicosia	19	3 474.5	DPA/DFS	UNFICYP
2.	Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar	General Assembly resolution 48/150 (1994)	New York Headquarters	5	1 216.7	DPA/DPA	
3.	Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara	S/2005/498	New York Headquarters/ Home	1	629.2	DPA/DPA	
4.	Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)	Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)	New York Headquarters	3	734.1	DPA/DPA	
5.	Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide	S/2004/568 (resolution 1366 (2001))	New York Headquarters	9	2 575.6	n.a./DPA	
6.	United Nations representative to the International Advisory and Monitoring Board of the Development Fund for Iraq[c]	Security Council resolution 1483 (2003) S/2003/1030	New York Headquarters		—	DM/DM	
7.	United Nations Representative to the Geneva international discussions	S/2010/103 S/2011/279 A/65/328/Add.7	Geneva	7	1 469.0	DPA/DFS	UNOMIG
Cluster II							
8.	Monitoring Group on Somalia/Eritrea	Security Council resolution 1519 (2003)	Nairobi	3 (8)	2 186.2	DPA/DPA	
9.	Panel of Experts on Liberia	Security Council resolution 1760 (2007)	Home	— (3/1)	641.7	DPA/DPA	
10.	Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire	Security Council resolution 1584 (2005)	Home	1 (5)	1 302.9	DPA/DPA	
11.	Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Security Council resolution 1533 (2004)	Home	1 (6/1)	1 447.9	DPA/DPA	
12.	Panel of Experts on the Sudan	Security Council resolution 1591 (2005)	Addis Ababa	2 (5/3)	1 802.7	DPA/DPA	
13.	Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Security Council resolution 1874 (2009)	New York Headquarters	5 (7/2)	3 036.2	DPA/DPA	
14.	Panel of Experts on the Islamic Republic of Iran	Security Council resolution 1929 (2010)	New York Headquarters	4 (8)	3 217.7	DPA/DPA	

		Establishing decision	Based in: central and sub-offices, and liaison[a]	2011 staff[b]	2011 budget (Thousands of United States dollars)	Lead department/ admin. support	Neighbouring and predecessor missions
15.	Al-Qaida/Taliban Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team and Office of the Ombudsperson	Security Council resolution 1526 (2004)	New York Headquarters	10 (9/1)	4 299.0	DPA/DPA	
16.	Panel of Experts on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Security Council resolution 1970 (2011)	Home	2 (8)	1 670.4	DPA/DPA	
17.	Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and group of experts (Security Council resolution 1977 (2011))	Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) (10-year mandate)	New York Headquarters	5 (8)	3 045.7	ODA/ODA	
18.	Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate	Security Council resolution 1373 (2001)	New York Headquarters	40	8 902.0	CTED/CTED	
Cluster III							
19.	United Nations Office for West Africa	S/2001/1129	Dakar for West Africa	32	7 715.3	DPA/DFS	CNMC
20.	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia	S/2007/280 (open mandate)	Ashgabat for Central Asia	29	3 133.0	DPA/DFS	
21.	United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa	S/2010/457	Libreville for Central Africa	20	3 505.2	DPA/DFS	
22.	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone	Security Council resolution 1829 (2008)	Freetown and 4 sub-offices	82	16 629.6	DPA/DFS	UNIOSIL UNAMSIL UNOMSIL
23.	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic	S/PRST/2009/5	Bangui and 4 sub-offices	157	19 793.6	DPA/DFS	BONUCA MINURCAT MINURCA
24.	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau	Security Council resolution 1876 (2009)	Bissau	119	18 440.1	DPA/DFS	UNOGBIS
25.	United Nations Office in Burundi	Security Council resolution 1959 (2010)	Bujumbura and 4 sub-offices	134	22 145.8	DPA/DFS	BINUB ONUB UNOB
26.	United Nations Political Office for Somalia	S/PRST/1995/15 (open mandate)	Mogadishu and 4 sub-offices (Nairobi)	105	16 345.0	DPA/DFS	UNSOA AMISOM UNOSOM I-II
27.	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon	S/2007/86 (open mandate)	Beirut	82	9 094.2	DPA/DFS	UNIFIL UNSCO/PRSG

		Establishing decision	*Based in: central and sub-offices, and liaison*[a]	*2011 staff*[b]	*2011 budget (Thousands of United States dollars)*	*Lead department/ admin. support*	*Neighbouring and predecessor missions*
28.	United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission	S/2004/298[d] S/2004/299 (open mandate)	Dakar for Cameroon-Nigeria	20	8 714.2	DPA/DFS	UNOWA
29.	United Nations Support Mission in Libya	Security Council resolution 2009 (2011)				DPA/DFS	
30.	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan	Security Council resolution 1401 (2002)	Kabul and 8 sub-offices (Islamabad, Tehran, Kuwait)	2 755	259 059.0	DPKO/DFS	
31.	United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq	Security Council resolution 1500 (2003)	Baghdad and 3 sub-offices (Amman, Kuwait, Tehran)	1 051	201 536.3	DPA/DFS	

Abbreviations: DPA, Department of Political Affairs; DFS, Department of Field Support; DM, Department of Management; n.a., not applicable; CTED, Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate; PRSG, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General.

[a] This includes the main office (in the capital city), sub-offices in the same country and liaison or support offices in other countries. Terminology varies, for example, sub-offices are called regional offices in UNPOS, UNAMA and BNUB.

[b] (x/y) refers to (experts/consultants).

[c] Established in May 2003, considered liquidated in 2008-2009 then re-presented in 2010-2011.

[d] Authorization to move support to the CNMC onto the regular budget (it was established in December 2002).

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Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 64/215 on legal empowerment of the poor and eradication of poverty

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/215. It finds that expanding access to justice and the rule of law is important for poverty reduction and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. Legal empowerment of the poor requires improvements in the administration of justice and expansion of identity and birth registration, as well as the repeal of laws that impede the poor from exercising their rights. Key legal instruments for poverty reduction include pro-poor property rights and access to land and assets, employment policy and regulatory frameworks that protect labour and increase employment, a fair, inclusive and socially responsible private sector, and quality education and training that target vulnerable populations in particular. Furthermore, international cooperation efforts should be cognizant of and conducive to the legal empowerment of the poor. Finally, national and local contexts, including traditional or informal dispute resolution mechanisms, must be considered in any reforms aimed at empowering people living in poverty.

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I. Introduction

1. General Assembly resolution 64/215 recognized that the legal empowerment of the poor was essential for the effective eradication of poverty. Legal empowerment of the poor focuses on the legal protection of assets, labour and economic transactions ensuring the security of livelihoods, shelter, identity, tenure and contracts. Reduction of poverty depends on institutions' ability to deliver goods and services, regulate the market in the public interest and provide legal access to economic assets in ways that are fair and equitable. In this way, legal empowerment can accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through legal reform, institutional strengthening and empowering disadvantaged groups.

2. The General Assembly, in its resolution 64/215, takes note of the broad diversity of national experiences in the area of legal empowerment of the poor, recognizes the initiatives undertaken by some countries in advancing the legal empowerment of the poor as an integral part of their national strategies and objectives, and stresses the importance of promoting the sharing of national best practices in this regard.

3. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-sixth session a report on the implementation of the resolution, taking into account the national experiences and views of Member States. To this end, the Secretariat sent a questionnaire to the Governments of all Member States requesting information on national experiences and views with regard to legal empowerment of the poor and eradication of poverty. Ten countries, Austria, Georgia, Guatemala, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Mongolia and Thailand, responded to the questionnaire. The present report is based primarily on the country responses and their thematic focus.[1] Input was also sought from the United Nations system through the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, which is responsible for the coordination and coherence of rule of law activities within the United Nations system. Through the Group, United Nations agencies provided input to the present report, giving information on their activities, as well as additional country and regional examples.

4. The themes addressed in the present report emerged from General Assembly resolution 64/215. They are: (a) the rule of law and access to justice; (b) property rights and access to land; (c) full employment and decent work; (d) a socially responsible private sector; (e) education and training; and (f) international cooperation.

II. Background

5. In 2004, Norway, with the support of Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden, proposed the establishment of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor to contribute to poverty eradication efforts. In 2005, the independent Commission was launched by Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Republic of Tanzania with the support of the United States of

[1] The examples presented in the present report are not intended to be a comprehensive account of developments in the responding countries or in the field but reflect responses received.

America. The final report of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, entitled *Making the Law Work for Everyone*,[2] stressed the importance of sharing best practices in legal empowerment of the poor. The General Assembly took note of the Commission's report in its resolution 63/142.

6. The 2008 report by the Commission describes legal empowerment as "a process of systemic change through which the poor and excluded become able to use the law, the legal system, and legal services to protect and advance their rights and interests".[2] Legal empowerment of the poor is an approach to development which recognizes that poverty results from disempowerment, exclusion and discrimination. The approach calls for institutional and legal reform and aims to empower individuals and communities to become agents of their own development, through strengthening their livelihoods, property and labour rights and facilitating entrepreneurship.

III. Rule of law and access to justice

7. Despite widespread and growing recognition of and adherence to human rights standards and the rule of law, many people, particularly people living in poverty, women, indigenous peoples and disadvantaged groups, still lack access to justice and protections guaranteed through national and international legal frameworks. Access to justice requires not only legal rights but also awareness of those rights and reasonable access to the mechanisms by which grievances can be redressed. Often, the time, effort and cost needed to access courts or other justice mechanisms is prohibitive. Where justice systems are accessible, they often do not operate fairly or efficiently and may not be guided by statutory law. Lack of efficient resolution of civil cases such as land or property disputes undermines the business environment, making escape from poverty difficult. In crisis settings such as conflicts and disasters, internally displaced people are often deprived of their basic human rights, including legal protection for land and property rights, and lack access to identity papers and personal documentation.

8. A broad range of local, national and global efforts are under way to expand access to justice. Those efforts include legal reform to strengthen gender equality, financial assistance for those in need and public education about the legal system, as well as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Women, displaced persons and indigenous people are also being made the focus of increased access to justice in some countries.

9. For example, in Thailand, the Government has initiated a range of activities to improve access to justice, including establishing a justice fund with the aim of providing financial assistance for legal services. Japan approved the Comprehensive Legal Support Act of 2004, designed to provide all citizens with necessary information and services for legal solutions of disputes on both civil and criminal affairs, so that the justice system may be utilized more easily by citizens. The Japan Legal Support Centre provides all citizens in Japan with information services, civil legal aid and other forms of legal assistance.

[2] Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor and United Nations Development Programme, *Making the Law Work for Everyone*, vol. I, *Report of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor* (New York, 2008). Available from www.undp.org/legalempowerment/report/index.html.

10. The right to a legal identity is essential to ensure access to entitlements and the right to nationality and citizenship. Civil registration is an important tool to ensure and protect the legal rights of individuals and their access to entitlements.

Civil registration and citizenship

11. Jordan, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Thailand have developed civil registration systems over recent decades. Although progress is being made and civil registration systems are being developed in a number of countries, many countries still lack comprehensive civil registration. A well-functioning civil registration system requires the institutional, legal and technical capacity to record vital events such as births, marriages and deaths. The United Nations Statistics Division reports that only 60 per cent of 230 countries and areas register at least 90 per cent of births that occurred in the country. For death registration, only 47 per cent of the countries and areas have at least 90 per cent coverage.[3] Legal recognition of births and deaths is important for ensuring access to social services and the resolution of court cases. Birth registration is important for demonstrating parentage and place of birth, which are often key factors in determining citizenship. Citizenship enables access to other rights, such as the right to reside in a country, the right to protection under the law and the right to social services. People in rural and remote areas are less likely to be included in civil registration systems than urban dwellers.

12. In some countries, women lack equal rights of citizenship and the ability to transmit citizenship to their children or spouses, although progress is being made on this front. Since 2002, Egypt, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Morocco have introduced reforms to give women greater rights to transmit citizenship to their children, while Algeria, Iraq, Qatar and Tunisia have taken steps to amend laws that discriminate against women in relation to passing citizenship to both children and spouses. In 2006, the Nepal Citizenship Act was passed, enabling children to claim citizenship through their mothers for the first time.

13. Geographical and language barriers pose a challenge to universal civil registration. In order to help overcome these barriers and increase the inclusiveness of the civil registration system, Guatemala has conducted two major awareness and registration campaigns in different parts of the country. In 2008, a campaign was run in the town of Chichicastenango, Quiché, where more than 97 per cent of the population is rural and indigenous. The Registro Nacional de las Personas, the institution responsible for civil registration, established partnerships with the municipality, indigenous leaders, community development councils and representatives of health and education sectors. Through the training of and collaboration with community leaders, the campaign succeeded in registering more than 450 people and initiated a network of local actors who continue to promote the civil registry. In 2009, similar campaigns were conducted in three other municipalities, both in Spanish and the Mayan languages.

14. Lebanon is implementing a national programme to help people living in poverty by building a database of poor families. The registration system is intended to help identify their needs and tailor interventions with the goal of reducing poverty by half, from 8 per cent to 4 per cent, by 2015, in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

[3] For more information, see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVS/CR_coverage.htm.

15. Civil registration is a key component used to generate quality population statistics, which are essential for monitoring progress on internationally agreed development goals. Several United Nations agencies assist developing countries in improving their population statistics. The United Nations Statistics Division, among other activities, provides a range of technical advice and support to developing countries that are working to implement and improve their civil registration systems.[4] The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund also work with developing countries to improve their population statistics.

Women and vulnerable populations

16. Women, indigenous peoples and displaced persons face legal marginalization, compounding the problems associated with their higher risk of living in poverty. While access to justice should be universal, it is often useful to target within a universal framework, programmes and laws towards traditionally excluded groups.

17. Many countries are using innovative approaches to enable women to access justice. Over the past two decades, legal reforms have strengthened gender equality in Nepal, ensuring greater economic security for women, protecting them from violence, safeguarding their sexual and reproductive rights, amplifying their voices in decision-making, ensuring equal inheritance and property rights and expanding their divorce rights.

18. In the United Republic of Tanzania, a programme called "Jurisprudence on the ground" has been launched by the International Association of Women Judges and the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa — Tanzania. The programme shares knowledge with judges and magistrates to enable them to tackle gender bias in the judicial system, helps to educate local women in order for them to understand their basic rights and supports them in navigating the legal system. As part of the programme, accessible public education materials have been developed in English and Swahili on women's rights, including practical information on which court to approach, what to expect as a witness and how to register a complaint if one encounters corruption. The programme has helped to improve the accountability of judges to ordinary women; when judges are aware of the barriers that women face, their attitudes change, and they tend to come up with simple but effective solutions, such as waiving court fees, providing forms free of charge or prioritizing sensitive cases.

19. In Argentina, the Supreme Court of Justice, with support from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNDP and UNICEF, established a dedicated office of domestic violence to provide rapid access to justice and facilitate coordination between agencies in 2008. Women reporting violence are given immediate assistance from a multidisciplinary team including lawyers, psychologists and social workers who provide support services, collect evidence and carry out detailed risk assessments to recommend measures for victim protection.

20. In South Africa, thuthuzela care centres were introduced as part of a national anti-rape campaign, which includes providing rape survivors with a range of integrated services. The centres, which bring together emergency medical care,

[4] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVS/default.htm.

forensic services, counselling and court preparation information, aim to address the medical and social needs of sexual assault survivors, reduce secondary victimization, improve conviction rates and reduce delays in court cases. It is estimated that the centres deal with about 20 per cent of all victims of sexual offences in South Africa and have helped to increase conviction rates in rape cases to 89 per cent, compared with the national average of 7 per cent. The trial completion time for cases dealt with by some of the centres has also decreased to 7½ months from the national average of around 2 years.

21. Jordan has hosted workshops and awareness campaigns conducted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to advise refugees on their rights, which include free access to the courts of law and the right to legal assistance wherever possible. Guatemala has been providing training workshops and seminars to educate judges on issues related to the rights of indigenous peoples.

Alternative dispute resolution and mobile justice

22. Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation are increasingly being established in many countries. Such mechanisms can provide a means for resolving disputes without incurring the cost and inconvenience of litigation. Community-based networks can be used to prevent crime, provide treatment and protect individual's rights. Alternative dispute resolution and court mechanisms can be community-based or mobile, so they increase geographical access to justice, particularly in remote and rural areas.

23. In Thailand, the Ministry of Justice has initiated a justice community network which works in partnership with the people in the community with the aim of preventing crime, developing dispute resolution, providing treatment for offenders and protecting rights and liberties. The Ministry of Justice is also making efforts to ensure justice for people in southern border provinces by enhancing fair settlement of disputes and alternative justice processes and rehabilitating people affected by unrest.

24. Several countries, including Guatemala, Nepal and Thailand, are implementing mobile justice clinics with the aim of providing legal information and assistance to people living in remote areas. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mobile courts have been used to bring justice closer to women. In 2010, nine mobile courts adjudicated 186 cases. Of these, 115 rape cases were heard, which resulted in 95 convictions, leading to prison sentences for perpetrators ranging from 3 to 20 years.

IV. Property rights and access to land

25. The absence or insecurity of property rights, particularly with regard to land, remains a central cause of poverty, especially in the poorest countries. Effective recognition of property rights can facilitate access to utilities, such as electricity and running water, and to credit, which enables entrepreneurship and property development. Transferability of assets also provides a buffer for external shocks, such as ill health, death and loss of employment in the household. Furthermore, ownership of assets makes the holders more capable of accessing and using public resources and strengthens their voice in decision-making. Expanding the legal

protection of assets of the poor and promoting access to property by the poor are therefore crucial for their empowerment.

Land titling and informal settlements

26. The strong links between poverty and tenure insecurity have prompted numerous efforts to increase individual land ownership, particularly for women and people living in poverty. Statutory land reforms provide the poor with greater tenure security on land they already occupy. In order for land reforms to be successful, they must combine legislative reform with strong implementation and awareness-raising campaigns targeted at the poor and vulnerable. The power of statutory law depends on the enforcement of the rule of law in the country and the efficiency of public administration at the local level.[5] Countries have enhanced their citizens' access to land and property through titling land, granting loans and regularizing State land, including in the context of irregular settlements.

27. It is important that land-titling efforts take into account the complexity of property rights at the local level. Access and control of land and related natural resources at the local level depend not only on statutory law but also on a range of customary and religious laws and other normative or legal frameworks. For example, in Africa, 90 per cent of people living in rural areas access land through customary mechanisms.

28. Access to land can be hindered by historic factors related to the distribution of wealth and to ownership and availability of land. In Guatemala, the 2010 amendment to the Land Fund Act has provided people living in rural areas with the possibility of gaining access to land through loans and the regularization of State land. Moreover, the land registry process benefited 192,700 people during the period from 2006 to 2010. Guatemala has also benefited more than 96,600 people through negotiation and mediation services that aim to resolve land conflicts and has implemented rural development programmes consisting of agricultural productivity, training and welfare components.

29. In some countries, especially in economies in transition, private land ownership was only recently legalized. In Mongolia, private ownership of land was made possible in 2003, and since then, the Government has taken concrete steps to ensure the access of all citizens to land and property. The 1994 Land Law was the first legislation to regulate the possession, use and protection of land, followed by the 2003 Law on Mongolian Citizens' Ownership of Land. In 2003, a Government programme that allowed family possessors of residential land to title the land was implemented. In 2008, the General Authority for State Registration also removed land registration fees in order to encourage all citizens, including the poor, to register their land.

30. Property rights remain a challenge not only in rural areas but also in suburban and peri-urban areas, particularly in the context of irregular settlements. The Government of Mexico is allowing poor households to regularize their property in irregular settlements. This is facilitating poor people's access to credit and giving them opportunities to initiate small businesses and other income-generating projects.

[5] See Ruth Meinzen-Dick, "Property rights for poverty reduction?", Department of Economic and Social Affairs Working Paper, No. 91 (New York, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2008). Available from www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2009/wp91_2009.pdf.

In Mongolia, the Property Rights Project is expected to improve the formal system of recognizing and transferring land rights in suburban and peri-urban areas and issue up to 75,000 privatized and registered land titles.

31. The United Nations system is engaged in supporting Governments to enforce and promote property rights, including through the property regularization process. In Ukraine, UNDP is working with the Government to foster full enjoyment of land and property rights. The project aims to ensure that rural landowners in Ukraine become aware of their rights and understand the economic benefits that land and property ownership entail and to provide legal assistance and information to citizens in order for them to effectively exercise their property and land rights.

Women's access to land and property

32. Women represent a large share of the agricultural labour force but remain disadvantaged in their access to land and other productive resources. In Africa, women represent almost 50 per cent of the agricultural labour force but own only 15 per cent of land holdings.[6] Greater priority must be given in national development policies to improve women's direct access to land and productive assets. This may include changes in inheritance laws and in social norms and attitudes towards women's claims, in addition to the promotion of legal literacy, provision of legal aid and gender sensitization of officials.

33. Land registration and formalization programmes, however, can lead to the erosion of women's customary land rights if the land is registered in the name of the male head of household. Government transfers of agricultural land distributed under anti-poverty, land reform or resettlement schemes should be allowed in women's names and should include women's secondary rights to land (see the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its twelfth session, E/2010/33). Recent tenure reforms in Ethiopia require that wives' names be registered with their husbands', which increased women's awareness of the certification process and the inclusion of women in the registration.

34. Enhancing women's access to land and property rights is also an important priority for United Nations agencies. In Kyrgyzstan, UN-Women has taken comprehensive measures to ensure women's property rights. UN-Women supported capacity-building for local officials, launched media campaigns to raise awareness of women's legal rights and established legal aid clinics in remote areas to provide free legal aid and representation to thousands of women. In Ethiopia, UNDP supported projects that were integral to initiating the revision of the Family Code of Ethiopia to include terms that provide women rights equal to those of men. In Rwanda, UNDP facilitated citizens' awareness-raising with regard to the legal provisions on land, property and inheritance. In addition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations supports Government efforts to ensure that their policies and programmes promote and support women as equal contributors to agriculture and rural development, including through their access to land and other productive assets.

[6] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011: Women in Agriculture — Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome, 2011).

V. Full employment and decent work

35. Expansion of employment with decent wages and working conditions is the most effective way to eradicate poverty. The right to employment (or gainful work) is indeed recognized by the constitutions of many countries. In practice, however, this right often remains unfulfilled. The private sector often fails to generate as many employment opportunities as are required, while the public sector feels constrained owing to financial and other reasons. National Governments are implementing a broad range of policies to support and promote the right to employment and labour rights, including expanding dialogue between labour, Government and trade unions and establishing labour dispute mechanisms. Vulnerable populations are also being made the focus of employment programmes.

36. In 2005, India adopted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act aimed at providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment per year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. This demonstrates that budgetary constraints on employment expansion programmes aimed at the poor are not insurmountable. Such programmes also have a positive impact on the growth of the economy as they boost the poor's purchasing power, which is mostly directed to domestically produced goods and services.

37. In Mongolia, the laws on the right to employment and labour relations were adopted in 2001. In 2011, the Government of Mongolia intends to amend these laws by harmonizing them with international norms and standards. The Government action plan for 2008-2012 aims to provide employment to each citizen. In April 2011, Mongolia increased the minimum wage by 30 per cent. The Government is exploring incentives for employers that sustained a substantial number of jobs and created new ones. A small and medium-sized enterprise fund has been created to encourage and promote entrepreneurship.

38. In Georgia, the protection of labour rights, fair compensation and safe working conditions for women and children are defined by law. The labour code prohibits discrimination against marginalized and vulnerable populations. In 2010, Georgia in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), founded a trilateral commission on social partnership, which aims to institutionalize social dialogue among the Government, employers and trade unions.

39. In Iraq, the Constitution provides that work is a right for all Iraqis; that the law regulates the relationship between employers and employees; and that the State shall guarantee freedom of movement of Iraqi manpower, goods and capital between regions and governorates. Iraq is in the process of signing the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Iraq is also providing job opportunities to the unemployed in all groups in society without discrimination, through the implementation of workshops and income-generating activities. Efforts have been made to prevent child labour in Iraq pursuant to article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to promote gender equality in the workplace and in the political sphere, where 25 per cent of elected parliamentarians are women.

40. Marginalized groups face particular challenges to attaining decent work. Policies geared towards safeguarding their rights and opportunities as labour force participants increase economic growth and contribute to poverty reduction. Many countries are taking steps to protect the labour rights of marginalized segments of

the population. In Mexico, the National Development Plan 2007-2012 includes various strategies to combat poverty, including strengthening employment-related projects focused on vulnerable groups and advancing the concept of social security to expand the scope and coverage of Government programmes to vulnerable groups.

41. Ukraine recently implemented a programme in collaboration with UNDP and ILO to safeguard the rights and opportunities of working-age persons with disabilities through increased access to employment so as to overcome the very low participation rates of persons with disabilities in the labour force. One of the activities of the programme was to improve legislation regarding job placement and employment of persons with disabilities. This involved reviewing national legislation for consistency with relevant international conventions and making recommendations for new regulatory instruments to bring national legislation in line with international norms, as well as ensuring its implementation. The programme has resulted in increased employment for persons with disabilities: in 2008 one third of working-age people with a disability had a job. By 2011, that figure had increased to one half.

42. Facilitating the movement of people to work across borders is also an important component of a fair, multilateral trading system and helps migrant workers and their families to come out of poverty. Recent trends in a number of destination countries to curb the flow of migrant workers are a concern, especially during difficult economic times, when remittances from these migrant workers have decreased.[7]

43. Several countries have legislated to protect domestic workers. Jordan amended its labour laws to include domestic workers, guaranteeing monthly payment of salaries, sick leave and a maximum 10-hour working day. In Indonesia, the law on domestic violence includes the protection of domestic workers against violence within its scope. In Costa Rica, the reform of the Labour Code in 2009 specified terms of employment for domestic workers. The International Labour Conference adopted the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011, and an accompanying guidance instrument, the Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011, to improve the lives of some 53 million domestic workers, many of whom face additional discrimination because of their gender or status.

44. In order to achieve democratic governance structures that provide adequate access to labour justice and efficient labour dispute resolution mechanisms, countries have been modernizing their labour legislation and implementing strong enforcement mechanisms, including labour inspection and labour dispute settlement systems. The Labour Dispute Settlement Project in Cambodia and the modernization of the administration of justice in Nicaragua, implemented with support from ILO, have succeeded in helping to build reliable alternative dispute resolution bodies and reform entire labour justice systems to drastically reduce judicial backlog. Technical assistance in such projects has included conducting critical reviews of national justice systems and helping State legislatures reform existing laws and draft new ones.

45. The Better Work Programme, a partnership between ILO and the International Finance Corporation which operates in Cambodia, Haiti, Indonesia, Lesotho,

[7] *MDG Gap Task Force Report 2011: The Global Partnership for Development — Time to Deliver* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.I.11).

Nicaragua and Viet Nam, focuses on key industries in those countries and provides advisory services and training to promote working conditions that are in line with national and international standards. Better Work programmes have succeeded in helping secure more employment opportunities, better quality working conditions, improvements in freedom of association, wage increases and improved workplace relations.

VI. Encouraging a socially responsible private sector

46. A dynamic, inclusive, well-functioning and socially responsible private sector is a valuable instrument for generating economic growth and reducing poverty. Policy and regulatory frameworks at the national level can encourage the promotion of an enabling environment that facilitates entrepreneurship and doing business by all, including women and people living in poverty. Private sector development must be sustainable and socially responsible; growth generated by reducing the benefits and protections of the average worker is likely to be unsustainable and short-lived and ultimately have long-term negative implications on human capital, productivity and overall economic growth. In addition, the expansion of infrastructure and market access is a precondition for private sector development in rural areas, especially in low-income countries. Food security, poverty reduction and the growth of dynamic rural farmers largely depend on rules-based market development at the local level and public investment in economic and social infrastructure. Many Governments are taking steps to increase competitiveness and economic growth by creating favourable climates for business by reducing regulation and costs associated with doing business. At the international level, the opening of markets by developed countries for exports from developing countries benefits the development of the latter's private sector. Finally, the international business climate is benefited by the harmonization of commerce law.

47. The Government of Mexico has been promoting, as part of its national development plan for 2007-2012, the integration of a national competitiveness agenda in order to create conditions that will ensure a favourable business climate to promote competition and increase productivity and employment. Several programmes and measures have been applied in recent years, including the Trade Facilitation Programme, which aims to reduce the costs associated with trade. The Regulatory Reform Programme aims to increase competitiveness and strengthen economic development through various activities, including significantly reducing the transaction costs faced by businesses and citizens to promote the competitiveness of the national economy. The Government is also seeking to eliminate costs, procedures and regulations to facilitate access to cutting-edge technologies that enable companies to generate innovation.

48. The Constitution of Georgia requires the State to promote free entrepreneurship and the development of competition. The Government of Georgia has taken several important steps towards attracting investment and spurring economic development, including simplifying registration procedures for entrepreneurs, simplifying the tax code and system and reducing tax rates. The procedure for businesses to obtain licences and permits has been simplified, and the number of permits and licences needed to operate a business has been reduced by 88 per cent. Finally, transparent privatization of State business has been used as a strategy to attract foreign investment and increase the role of the private sector in the country's economy. The

reforms have been successful in creating a conducive environment for business as the number of registered enterprises increased threefold between 2003 and 2010.

49. The opening of markets by developed countries for exports from developing countries would support socially responsible private sector development and job creation in developing countries. A rules-based and fair international trading system is essential for the accelerated economic growth required to increase incomes and reduce poverty. During the recent economic and financial crisis, most jobs lost in developing countries were in export sectors, forcing workers into vulnerable employment with lower pay and reduced social security benefits.[7]

50. Relevant in this context are the activities of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). WTO helps to make the multilateral trading system secure and predictable through its dispute resolution body, which handles disputes over trade rules among WTO members. Through its formulation of rules, provision of technical assistance and other activities, UNCITRAL assists States in creating an enabling environment for private sector development based on internationally recognized legal standards. UNCITRAL legal standards contribute to the success of small- and medium-scale enterprises, as well as to job creation, income generation in households and the formalization of the informal business sector, all of which are relevant to the legal empowerment of the poor. Examples of UNCITRAL assistance to States with their commercial law reforms include the Private Sector Development Programme of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in Iraq, the "Ease of doing business" project of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation in Indonesia and Peru, the East African Community Task Force on Cyberlaws and the World Bank law reform projects in the field of alternative dispute resolution.

VII. Education and training

51. Education and training are critical factors in empowering people living in poverty and an imperative to the legal empowerment of the poor. Education provides opportunities, through skill development, for people to advance their status and improve their livelihoods and thus break the cycle of poverty. Education is also a necessity for people living in poverty to overcome barriers to legal representation and achieve full rights to property, employment and businesses. It is also critical in tackling local corruption and taking full advantage of the services that Government provides. Education and literacy help people to obtain information and knowledge about their rights, facilitating their access to justice. Education and training are therefore the cornerstone of overcoming destitution and legal exclusion and providing people living in poverty with a means to lift themselves out of their situation and demand justice and equal rights.

Access to quality education

52. According to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the right to education includes the right to free, compulsory primary education for all and an obligation to make secondary education, including vocational and technical education, accessible to all. Despite the sustained efforts to provide education, globally 11 per cent of young people between 15 and 24 years of age, amounting to 127 million people, lacked basic reading and writing skills in

2009.[8] Countries have taken steps to ensure access to and the quality of education, taking into account their national settings and the special needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations.

53. As access to education has steadily increased, the quality of education remains a concern. Financing for education in sub-Saharan Africa has increased 6 per cent every year for the past decade, together with increased enrolment rates, but educational gains do not always match this progress. South Africa has tried to address the issue of quality of education through pro-poor reforms that have effectively directed public spending to poor children. Large gaps, however, already exist by age 8 between the performance of the poorer communities and that of more affluent communities, due to a lack of quality teachers and learning materials, ineffective resource management and poor socio-economic conditions in the communities.[9]

54. Countries have taken various measures to combat illiteracy, including prioritizing partnerships, adult education and access to disadvantaged groups. The Government of Guatemala has prioritized literacy programmes for illiterate young people and adults, with a focus on women in rural and peri-urban areas, and reached about 79,000 beneficiaries in 2010. The Government has also managed to eradicate illiteracy in several municipalities by creating synergies with local governments, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. In Mongolia, the Government identified, through a population and housing census, the number of illiterate people (amounting to 2.2 per cent of the population) and their characteristics and tackled the issue through innovative approaches to adult literacy programmes, including life skills training and hybrid group training.

55. In order for Governments to respond to the needs of the poor, educational planning must be tailored to the national context. In Mongolia, the Law on Education, adopted in 2002, provides a legal environment that supports both formal and non-formal education and mandates that the citizens of Mongolia have a right to education in formal and non-formal settings. The Law has provided an educational framework that takes into account the diverse needs of the population. Guatemala is responding to the call for multilingual education embedded in its Constitution and Peace Treaty and provides bilingual education in 17 different Mayan languages in order to provide quality education and equal opportunities for different linguistic communities. Mexico has developed an intersectoral approach to improve the welfare of families living in poverty that takes into account the multidimensionality of poverty. Benefiting more than 5.7 million families in 2010, the "Oportunidades" programme provides scholarships in elementary and high school, access to basic health care and direct monetary and nutritional support for poor families.

56. Access to education in rural areas remains a critical barrier to ensuring that the most disadvantaged portions of the population have an equal right to education. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, multilingual satellite schools are helping to ensure that indigenous girls in remote areas have access to education. Supported by a central school, the satellite schools send teachers out to isolated communities to

[8] *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.I.10).

[9] Servaas van der Berg and others, "Low quality education as a poverty trap" (Stellenbosch University, 2011).

provide classes that promote multiculturalism and impart language skills to indigenous children.

57. Children living in countries affected by conflict and refugee children face additional barriers to accessing education: 42 per cent of primary school-age children not enrolled in school (28 million) live in poor countries affected by conflict, whereas 37 per cent of refugee children in 87 urban areas have no access to schooling.[8] In Iraq, the Government has improved primary education, launched a community-based awareness campaign to prevent dropouts and reduced constraints and barriers to the education of girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education. In Jordan, the situation of refugee children has been addressed by granting refugees, particularly Iraqis, the right to register at public schools regardless of their legal status, resulting in more than 27,000 students registering in the public school system in 2010 and 2011.

Training

58. Training, including vocational, professional and on-the-job training, is a central vehicle to provide people with skills and capacities to obtain access to decent work and start their own enterprises. In the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis, retraining has become increasingly important for job seekers to respond to changing demands in the labour market and bridge gaps between jobs. Attention should be paid in particular to vulnerable groups and disenfranchised individuals. Countries and the United Nations system have developed and implemented training programmes that respond to the fluctuations in the labour market and take into consideration the needs of vulnerable groups, including people living in poverty, youth, migrant workers and refugees.

59. Several countries have targeted training programmes to marginalized groups, including people living in poverty and refugees. Lebanon is conducting country-wide training courses, with special allowances for marginalized groups, in order to allow them access to decent work. Guatemala reported the dramatic increase in beneficiaries of its training courses, from 129,000 people in 2009 to 196,000 in 2010. Georgia has initiated a programme to provide job seekers with three-month State scholarships in private companies with vacant positions. Jordan has restructured the National Aid Fund to assist the unemployed poor through the provision of vocational training and job opportunities. In addition, the Government has given Iraqi refugees access to Government-provided vocational training, in order to meet national labour demands and create job opportunities for refugees.

60. Governments have also responded to the growing challenge of employment of young people by targeting training to adolescents and recent graduates. In Mexico, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has implemented the Employment Support Programme, which offers various types of training to unemployed or underemployed youth aged 16 years or over in order to develop their knowledge and skills. The programme provides on-the-job training for technical jobs; internships for the professional and technical levels; self-employment training for people who want to start their own business; training vouchers for retraining and short-term skill development; and training for workers that are temporarily unemployed.

61. The United Nations system, particularly ILO, is broadly engaged in training activities. The ILO Skills and Employability Department implements initiatives that prepare workers and employers for economic and social changes in labour market

conditions worldwide. For example, the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment Programme is a proven platform that assists those working in poor rural communities to build skills and abilities for employment and income generation, with a specific focus on Africa.

VIII. International cooperation

62. Development cooperation between donor and recipient countries is a critical tool for improving the legal empowerment of the poor. In 2009, donors from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development allocated $4.2 billion to justice programming, with the United States of America and the European Union together accounting for 70 per cent of this amount. Gender equality has been an important objective within this assistance: $206 million was allocated to programmes with gender equality as a primary aim and $633 million to those with gender equality as a secondary aim. Canada, Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden were the largest donors to justice programmes in which gender equality was a primary aim.[10]

63. Because legal empowerment of the poor requires a broad approach to the rule of law and access to justice, donor nations have taken a variety of measures to tackle this issue. Japan has provided technical assistance to advance the rule of law, promoted democratization by establishing institutions and policies that protect the rights of the poor, and enabled the poor to participate in political activities. The Austrian Development Agency supports a variety of interventions that promote the legal empowerment of the poor, including projects that aim to: strengthen the judiciary and advance access to justice in Bhutan and Uganda; foster women's and girls' rights in Uganda and Central America; combat human trafficking in the Southern African Development Community region; advance social inclusion in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and support vulnerable groups in Africa, including persons with disabilities. The Agency also supports a variety of rural development, local governance and local development projects.

64. Regional cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, has become more prominent in recent years. Emerging economies and middle-income countries are engaging in development cooperation with countries from their region and sharing best practices. Thailand is engaging in technical cooperation with other developing countries in such areas as agriculture, education, public health and poverty reduction. In the Asian region, UNDP supports knowledge-sharing among Governments and civil society representatives through the Legal Empowerment Asia Partnership. In 2010, the Partnership, hosted by the Ministry of Justice of Thailand, supported regional learning and South-South cooperation by hosting an exchange of experiences between China, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Subsequent study tours between China, Mongolia and Viet Nam focused on ways to deliver legal aid services to marginalized and vulnerable workers. In 2011, the Partnership, hosted by Mongolia, will develop a guidance note on methodology for formal screening of laws and regulations for their impact on the poor, test the methodology nationally and share its experiences through its regional consultation meeting.

[10] See UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012: In Pursuit of Justice* (New York, 2011).

IX. Conclusions and the way forward

65. The national experiences and views of Member States reviewed for the present report highlight the importance of expanding access to justice and the rule of law; full employment and decent work; quality education and training targeted towards vulnerable groups; a socially responsible private sector and economic competitiveness; pro-poor property rights and access to land; and international cooperation, including technical and financial assistance for poverty reduction and empowerment of the poor.

66. Legal empowerment of the poor requires that people living in poverty be protected by effective legal instruments and that they have knowledge of and access to the paths available to redress rights violations. Identity and birth registration systems help people to establish and access their legal rights. Efforts to empower the poor should continue to focus on expanding the rule of law and access to justice for all through, inter alia, strengthening and improving the administration of justice, identifying and repealing laws that are barriers to legal empowerment, raising legal awareness and strengthening identity and birth registration systems.

67. National experiences in implementing the legal empowerment agenda highlight the importance of taking into consideration the national context and respecting traditional and/or informal means of resolving disputes while, at the same time, adhering to internationally agreed standards and rights.

68. Employment is the most effective way to reduce poverty. Employment policy and regulatory frameworks can contribute to poverty reduction and the empowerment of the poor by ensuring full employment and decent work for all by strengthening and protecting labour rights, including through respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work proclaimed by ILO.

69. Education and training are among the critical factors in empowering those living in poverty. Education and training opportunities, including literacy programmes, should be expanded, taking into account the needs of vulnerable populations.

70. Private sector entrepreneurship is a valuable instrument for generating economic growth and reducing poverty. Policy and regulatory frameworks that promote a dynamic, inclusive, well-functioning and socially responsible private sector also encourage the promotion of an enabling environment that facilitates entrepreneurship and doing business by all, including women and people living in poverty.

71. Property rights are an essential component of legal empowerment that facilitates access to credit, transfer of assets, entrepreneurship and business formation and contributes to poverty eradication. Strengthening respect for the rule of law, pro-poor property rights and appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks are important priorities in poverty reduction programmes.

72. The international community must continue to make the eradication of poverty a priority. To this end, support provided to developing countries' poverty eradication efforts should be conducive to the legal empowerment of the poor.

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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Programme of activities for the International Year for People of African Descent

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/36 and focuses on the programme of activities to mark the International Year for People of African Descent.

* A/66/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 64/169, the General Assembly proclaimed the year beginning on 1 January 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent, with a view to strengthening national actions and regional and international cooperation for the benefit of people of African descent in relation to their full enjoyment of economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights, their participation and integration in all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of society, and the promotion of a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage and culture.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly encouraged Member States, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates and existing resources, and civil society to make preparations for and identify possible initiatives that could contribute to the success of the Year.

3. In resolution 65/36, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary fund for the activities for the Year, to which Member States and all relevant donors were encouraged to contribute. In the same resolution, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to close the Year with the convening of a high-level thematic debate on the achievements of the goals and objectives of the Year. The General Assembly invited Member States to support the implementation of activities for the Year and to cooperate constructively and decisively to ensure rapid progress and concrete results in the achievement of the objectives of the Year. The General Assembly encouraged Member States, donors and other stakeholders to participate in and contribute, on a voluntary basis, to activities related to the Year. It encouraged the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates and existing resources, and intergovernmental organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to develop activities for the Year.

4. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to launch the Year with an opening day ceremony on 10 December 2010 and invited the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to facilitate and assist in the implementation of activities, in order to continue to contribute to the success of the Year, in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities and bodies.

5. Finally, the General-Assembly requested the Secretary General to submit to it at its sixty-sixth session a report on progress and the implementation of the resolution.

II. Implementation of resolution 65/36

6. On 24 March 2011, in compliance with paragraph 10 of resolution 65/36, notes verbales were sent to Member States and the other stakeholders mentioned in the resolution inviting them to transmit information on the activities that they had carried out, as well as the activities that they were planning to carry out, in the context of the International Year. A follow-up note verbale was sent on 25 May 2011. Contributions were received from 10 Member States, 5 United Nations bodies, 1 regional organization, 1 national human rights institution and 2 civil society organizations.

7. The present report contains summaries of the contributions received in response to the notes verbales.

III. Contributions received

A. Member States

Bosnia and Herzegovina

[Original: English]
[23 May 2011]

Bosnia and Herzegovina emphasized that the principle of non-discrimination was enshrined in both the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and entity constitutions and lower levels of Government, and that the parliamentary assembly had recently adopted a comprehensive law on the prevention of all forms of discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina are working on the text of a "rulebook on implementation", which will provide for the establishment of a unified database on any registered cases of discrimination.

Every year the council of ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopts a plan and programme to mark important human rights dates. That document obliges the appropriate authorities to mark the International Day relating to their individual field. Although no such day is included in the programme for people of African descent, it does include the Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March). Bosnia and Herzegovina will make efforts to include a day for people of African descent in the programme.

Colombia

[Original: Spanish]
[6 June 2011]

Colombia co-sponsored and actively promoted the adoption of resolution 64/169, which proclaims 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent. That process was supported by the President, Vice-President and the Minister of the Interior and Justice of Colombia.

On 21 January 2011, a photography exhibition entitled "Portraits of Afro-Colombian women" was inaugurated. From 28 February to 3 March, the sessions of the International Scientific Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Social Organization (UNESCO) project on the theme "The slave route" were held in Bogota and Cartagena. On 8 March, International Women's Day was commemorated, with special emphasis for 2011 placed upon women of African, Raizal and Palenquera descent. On 21 May, the national Day for Afro-Colombians was celebrated. On 20 July, which marks the celebration of Colombia's independence, several well-known Afro-Colombian artists performed. A proposal was made for an Ibero-American forum of black cultures to be held in Cali on 23 and 24 August. By its resolution 0740 of 18 May 2011, the Ministry of Culture declared the month of May as Afro-Colombian month.

On 29 April 2011, the Minister of the Interior and Justice presented a national development plan in Quibdo, in the region of Choco (which has the largest Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquera population in the country). On 28 May, the President held a session on the theme "accords for prosperity" in Cali (where there is a large black population), in which actions to be carried out during the year were discussed. On 16 and 17 June, there will be a forum on the theme "Colombia is multicultural, black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquera". On 20 May, an event on innovative policies for social inclusion and recognition of the Afro-Colombian population was held in Cali. From 31 May to 4 June, the second forum for women of African descent was held in Cali. The inauguration of an observatory for women of African descent will also be inaugurated. Throughout May, forums, academic presentations and cultural events will be held to celebrate Afro-Colombian month in different cities around the country.

In September, the Afro-Colombian group Chocquibtown will perform in Brisbane, Australia. In June and July, a photographic exhibition on Afro-Colombian women will be displayed in Pretoria. The exhibition will also be shown in Nairobi. In July, Afro-Colombian musicians and other artists will perform in festivals in Berlin, Vienna, London, Rome, Warsaw, Lisbon, Ottawa, San José and Kingston. An art exhibition will also take place in Havana in July. In September, a concert will be given in Stockholm. In November, a photographic exhibition and cultural events will take place in Tegucigalpa.

The National University of Colombia participated in the celebration of the International Year for People of African Descent by a course entitled "Cátedra Jorge Eliécer Gaitán" on race as a socio-historical construct, which was held from 28 February to 31 May.

On 24 May, and in association with the Vice-Presidency of the Republic and the Office in Colombia of OHCHR, representatives of the presidential programme for the formulation of strategies and actions for the holistic development of the Afro-Colombian population held a forum of experts on racial discrimination in Colombia.

On 13 May, a series of forums on the theme "We are Afros" was initiated by an alliance between the newspaper *El Tiempo*, the United Nation Development Programme, the French Embassy, the Alliance Française and the Programa ACU.

Costa Rica

[Original: Spanish]
[29 June 2011]

On 24 February, the National Commission for Afro-Costa Ricans was created through Executive Decree 36465-RE. The purpose of the Commission is to coordinate with different ministries and Government institutions, United Nations agencies, the Organization of American States (OAS) and other national and international organizations with regard to activities to be carried out in the context of the International Year for People of African Descent and beyond.

The Commission plans to establish a database on Afro-Costa Rican culture and promote a shared vision and joint commitment for sustainable national development and an inclusive Costa Rica. Other activities include the translation and

dissemination of Afro-centric history and the promotion, to the extent possible, of all activities that are similar and compatible with those carried out by the Commission. The Commission and the Government of Costa Rica are also supporting efforts to develop an inter-American convention against racism. In that regard, in 2010, Costa Rica assumed the presidency of the working group that is developing the convention and has taken several measures to advance and facilitate its elaboration. Costa Rica believes that the adoption of the convention would be a regional landmark in the context of the tenth anniversary of the Durban World Conference Against Racism and the International Year for People of African Descent.

Costa Rica has developed a project for a national action plan against racism and racial discrimination and is working on developing the plan itself. During the International Year, Costa Rica will implement concrete activities that will make the population of African descent visible in the country and the region, promote the recognition of the contributions that the population has made and improve its quality of life.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[11 May 2011]

Cuba prepared a programme of action for the International Year that is being implemented and in which Government institutions and civil society are actively participating. Some of the activities in the programme of action are described below.

A competition will be held on the theme "Memory, contributions to diversity", including biographies, testimonies, essays, stories, novels, poetry and theatre. Concerts will be held with some of the most prestigious Cuban musical groups to commemorate the International Year as well as efforts against racial discrimination and racial prejudices. Well-known Cuban painters will hold exhibitions on the theme. Special journalistic materials will be produced and distributed throughout the country with articles related to the theme of people of African descent in Cuba. A documentary will be produced on the activities of the Commission against Racism and Racial Discrimination. Texts on the subject of people of African descent will be published in Cuban magazines and newspapers. Meetings, debates and postgraduate courses on the subject of race will be promoted. Homage will be paid to men and women who played an important role in the creation of Cuba's national identity and in the fight to promote the values inherited from African cultures, and in achieving a more equitable society without differences based on skin colour.

A round-table discussion will be organized on Cuban television in order to disseminate information about the activities. Activities will also be organized to commemorate the bicentenary of the independence movement of people of African descent, which was led by the Cuban patriot José Antonio Aponte, and the centenary of the massacre of the *Independientes de Color*. An international poetry festival will be held. Additionally, the Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba's Commission against Racism and Racial Discrimination had proposed that every association of the institution (association of scenic artists; association of plastic artists; association of writers; association of musicians; association of film, radio and television directors) as well as the Directorate of Community Work, develop a plan of action in

commemoration of the International Year. A range of cultural activities are planned that are directed at the application of the United Nations resolution in coordination with the Nicolas Guillen Foundation, the Fernando Ortiz Foundation, the Association for the Friendship of Cuba and Africa, African House and other civil society organizations and State entities.

The above-mentioned activities constitute just a few examples of what is taking place in the country to commemorate the International Year for People of African Descent. Many other activities are being carried out, including through the media and at the community level.

Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]
[14 June 2011]

In the context of the International Year for People of African Descent, Ecuador is implementing processes defined as affirmative actions at the national level, which are carried out by the secretariat for peoples, social movements and citizen's participation. Projects and activities of an international character are also carried out under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Integration.

At the national level, Ecuador is implementing several initiatives, such as a plan for living well; a plurinational plan against racial discrimination, ethnic exclusion and culture; a plan for the redistribution of lands; the bank of the Ecuadorean institute for social security; the institute for popular economy; the "5-5-5" microcredit programme; and a human development grant.

Ecuador will also implement a week of solidarity to fight against racism and racial discrimination; the creation of 50 anti-discrimination units in decentralized autonomous governments; five agreements between ministries and public and private institutions to institutionalize a policy on inclusion; the application of a plan for quotas and grants for students and employment quotas; formal discussions on economic and social rights between civil society organizations and equality councils (or organizations of peoples and nationalities); and diversity encounters between nationalities, indigenous populations, Montubios and Ecuadoreans of African descent.

Ecuador will also implement a plan against racism in educational institutions; produce an informative kit with materials concerning the International Year for People of African Descent; pass hate crime laws; promote and apply affirmative measures in the areas of employment, social and economic inclusion, education and housing; hold community radio campaigns to publicize the plurinational plan against racism; design an instrument to evaluate compliance with the plan; promote the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; commemorate the International Year for People of African Descent at the national level; and celebrate the national Day for Ecuadoreans of African Descent.

At the international level, Ecuador will publish a link on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that will give information on activities connected with the Year; form an inter-ministerial commission for the execution of the plurinational plan for the elimination of racial discrimination; hold social and cultural events; and

organize academic events to discuss the theme "Recalling the history of people of African descent". On the national Day for People of African Descent (16 October), an international forum will be held on public policy and the advances and challenges for people of African descent. Other activities will include the publication in November of a record of the International Year; training given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ecuadorean civil servants outside the country on inter-culturality, people of African descent and affirmative action; and a library on people of African descent to be established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ecuador will also establish grants for people of African descent to study diplomacy; participate in a meeting of Government authorities in Brazil on the International Year, organized by Secretary-General of the Organization of Ibero-American States; participate in the first Ibero-American conference on cultures and communities of African descent, organized by the Organization of Ibero-American States; and establish cooperation agreements with international organizations such as the Union of South American Nations, the Bolivian Alliance for the Americas and the Andean Community.

Jamaica

[Original: English]
[24 June 2011]

The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture of Jamaica is spearheading the national thrust to commemorate the International Year of People of African Descent. A national working group, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and civil society organizations, has been established to develop and coordinate a series of African-themed events to be staged during the Year. A key focus of the national initiatives will be on the situation of Jamaicans as a people of African descent. Additionally, various activities and events will be aimed specifically at children and young people as well as individuals with whom they will have significant interaction, such as teachers in training. Events undertaken or being undertaken to commemorate the International Year of People of African Descent are the following:

(a) In March, a motorcade rally was held in Kingston in collaboration with the Rastafarian movement to mark the 45th anniversary of the State visit by the late Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, (the movement's recognized deity); the African Diplomatic Corps participated in selected community-based projects on Labour Day (23 May 2011); and a national symposium was held on 25 May 2011, which is globally recognized as African Liberation Day;

(b) A cultural exhibition will be held over "emancipation weekend", from 30 July to 1 August, on the theme "Ironies of coronation", and an "emancipation jubilee", to be held in Seville, near St. Ann, on 31 July 2011, will focus on the rituals of liberation and the triumph of the African people over slavery and oppression in Jamaica. An exhibition will be held of a collection of the works of the renowned late sculptor, painter and revivalist leader, Mallica "Kapo" Reynolds. Also, national heritage week, in October 2011, will highlight the various social, political and economic roles played by people of African descent in the growth and development of society.

Lithuania

[Original: English]
[1 June 2011]

In March 2011, in the context of the International Year for People of African Descent, representatives of Lithuania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a special event dedicated to Rwanda, with the participation of Rwanda genocide survivors and Lithuanian volunteers who had been working with them. On the occasion, a photo exhibition dedicated to the Rwandan people was inaugurated at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In May 2011, in collaboration with local enthusiasts, Lithuanians of African descent, Lithuanian volunteers who have worked in Africa, dedicated travellers, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania and the Lithuanian non-governmental organization "Balta scena" organized the first-ever "African Days" festival. The programme of the festival featured a variety of social and cultural events, including exhibitions, concerts, meetings, percussion and dance workshops and film demonstrations, that enabled Lithuanians to learn about the cultures, traditions and realities of sub-Saharan Africa.

As part of the programme, on 24 May 2011, on the eve of the International Day of Africa, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania opened a thematic photo exhibition on the theme "Africa through the eyes of Lithuanian diplomats".

Mauritius

[Original: English]
[27 June 2011]

The Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture of Mauritius, organized the following activities in the context of the International Year for People of African Descent:

(a) The network of People of African Origin was launched on 26 March 2011, during which a presentation on Africa was made by African students;

(b) A video conference was held with people of the African diaspora from Côte D'Ivoire, France, Haiti, Réunion Island and Rodrigues Island; and an event organized featuring typical African dishes;

(c) A talk was given at the Centre on 14 May 2011 on African socio-cultural norms and African traditional education and its fundamental values. On 25 May, in the context of Africa Day, the Centre launched the publication of *Our First Freedom Fighter: The Rising Sun of Freedom*.

The Nelson Mandela Cultural Centre for African Culture intends to host all of its future cultural activities in the context of the International Year.

Serbia

[Original: English]
[18 May 2011]

Activities held to celebrate the International Year for People of African Descent, the African Arts Museum in Belgrade include the following:

(a) An exhibition, from 16 February to 20 August, on weights for measuring golden powder and on the Akan people: the exhibition has shown more than 500 weights from the Museum's collection and over 200 weights from the collection of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, including samples from private collections, scales, boxes and scoops for gold powder;

(b) A workshop on 26 and 27 February on the theme "South Africa — Live": the Museum, together with the Association for Arts and Cultural Development of Africa, organized creative workshops for youth and children to raise awareness of South African art;

(c) A museum night on 14 May, for which the Museum organized an exhibition of installations and a special programme of events that visitors were able to plan themselves;

(d) A cultural event organized each year by the Museum, "Afro-Festival", represents a unique programme both in the country and the region; the International Year for People of African Descent will be marked with two important events within the festival;

(e) The Museum will feature an exhibition in June on African-American heritage, which forms an integral part of the culture of the United States of America: the Museum will showcase the musical crossroads of the Afro-American culture and sub-culture to show the historical development and new tendencies in Afro-American music;

(f) African Awareness Day, will be held in November in collaboration with the Brazilian Embassy in Belgrade; the Museum will mark the Day by highlighting the contribution made by the millions of slaves brought by force to Brazil from Africa in building the country.

Trinidad and Tobago

[Original: English]
[19 May 2011]

The International Year gives Trinidad and Tobago an opportunity to remember and note with gratitude the contribution of the African ancestors to the economic, social and cultural heritage of the country. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has therefore pledged the sum of $10,000 to the voluntary fund for the erection of a permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade at a place of prominence at United Nations Headquarters.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the International Year for People of African Descent was celebrated at a breakfast meeting and media launch on 26 January by the Prime Minister, who mandated the establishment of a multi-stakeholder team to formulate a national agenda of activities to commemorate the International Year for People of

African Descent. Also in attendance was a representative of the United Nations working group of experts on people of African descent.

The multi-stakeholder team was eventually established and included representatives of the Government (chaired by the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), civil society, multilateral organizations and academia. The team worked to draft a national agenda to commemorate the International Year for People of African Descent. Activities include:

(a) An Anansi storytelling competition, aimed at primary school children aged 9 to 11 and intended to document African oral traditions;

(b) An essay competition incorporating the Year into the existing Ministry of Foreign Affairs essay competition for secondary school children on the theme "Future diplomats";

(c) Model African Union sessions held at secondary schools and universities;

(d) The launch by the cultural chair of the emancipation support committee, in collaboration with the University of Trinidad and Tobago, of a booklet on the retention of African culture in Trinidad and Tobago, to be distributed to teacher trainees and secondary schools;

(e) Organization and planning by the national library and information systems authority of Trinidad and Tobago of a series of workshops and a lecture on the theme "Post traumatic slave syndrome"; and, in collaboration with UNESCO, a national symposium to engage the public in a national discourse on the political, social, economic and cultural contributions of persons of African descent to Trinidad and Tobago;

(f) Efforts to ensure the participation of Trinidad and Tobago in the pan African festival and emancipation day celebrations, held in Ghana from 27 July to 1 August;

(g) Nationwide promotion, at the community level, of African films, with the objective of educating the general public, thereby giving recognition to the directors, producers and artists.

Ukraine

[Original: Russian]
[9 June 2011]

On 4 April, in the context of the International Year for People of African Descent, the Ukrainian national library organized a historic discussion for children on the theme "We are against enslavement". On 27 April 2011, the Lugansk Regional Universal Scientific Library conducted a thematic discussion on "African legends".

On 16 June 2011, the Odessa state library will organize a round-table discussion on the theme "The year of friendships and partnerships: the potential of international relations between Ukraine and African countries".

Furthermore, Ukrainian cultural and art institutions regularly organize events that include African participants, with the objective of enhancing tolerance and

inter-ethnic dialogue and teaching about the history, culture and traditions of African peoples.

B. United Nations bodies

Department of Public Information

The Department of Public Information, working in close collaboration with OHCHR, initiated a range of activities to promote the observance of the International Year for People of African Descent.

With the International Year for People of African Descent as its primary focus, the Department engaged its network of United Nations information centres to promote the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March) at the national level through collaboration and proactive outreach initiatives. With seed money provided by the Department, special events, marking 21 March as part of the International Year for People of African Descent, were organized by the United Nations information centres. They include:

- **Paraguay**. In collaboration with the Brazilian Embassy in Paraguay, the United Nations information centre in Asunción staged an art show to raise awareness about people of African descent in Paraguay.
- **Poland**. The United Nations information centre in Warsaw translated the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action into Polish and organized several events, including a concert, a number of open-air events and meetings with secondary-school and university students.
- **United Republic of Tanzania**. In collaboration with the country's legal and human rights centre and the University of Dar es Salaam association of human rights, the United Nations information centre in Dar es Salaam organized a public lecture on the International Year for People of African Descent, the slave trade and racial discrimination.

On 21 March, as part of its educational outreach on racial discrimination, the Department organized a videoconference for middle and high school students on racial discrimination and the International Year for People of African Descent. Also in March, the Department hosted its first one-day global educators' videoconference as part of the observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

The Department plans to organize a mini-conference for students in September, before the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. At the conference, students will be invited to study the Declaration and to submit their own recommendations for the attention of Member States.

The Department has provided extensive coverage of events in observance of the International Year for People of African Descent and related issues. A total of 18 hours of events covered by United Nations Television were streamed in a United Nations webcast and archived. UNifeed, the Department's online video service for television stations worldwide, has produced video news packages. United Nations Radio has produced news and feature stories in the six official languages, as well as Kiswahili and Portuguese. The United Nations News Centre, a global gateway of

news about the United Nations, has provided coverage of the events on its Internet hub in the six official languages, and has further disseminated articles by e-mail, in English and French, to tens of thousands of subscribers worldwide, and on Twitter and Facebook to around 25,000 followers. The Department's Meetings Coverage Section has issued a total of 15 press releases (10 in English, 5 in French). In addition, the Department has launched a website on the International Year for People of African Descent, redesigned its website on the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and updated its website with new content on the elimination of racial discrimination, in all six languages.

For the September high-level meeting of the General Assembly, the Department plans to create a new website for the event, with full coverage of the plenary meetings in print, photos, television, webcast and related radio and video packages.

The Department published the 2011 edition of its best-selling book, *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, which includes chapters on the efforts of the United Nations to combat discrimination against people of African descent.

The Department is also designing, developing and producing an exhibition on the theme "People of African Descent", to be held at United Nations Headquarters in November 2011.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Commemorative activities for the International Year for People of African Descent are described below.

In April, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ecuador provided support for the organization of a photo exhibition entitled "let us never forget" ("*Para que nunca se nos olvide*") as a joint effort with the municipality of Esmeraldas, UNESCO and the International Centre for Cultural Diversity. A special *feria* was organized by UNHCR in the Ecuadorian province of Imbabura, to promote integration among the different social groups living in Ecuador, including people of African descent. That activity was carried out within the context of the campaign entitled "living together in solidarity" ("*Convivir en Solidaridad*").

The official launch in Colombia (Bogotá) of the International Year for People of African Descent, as well as in other countries in the region, is planned for May 2011, with a video presentation on Afro-Colombian youngsters on the Pacific coast of Colombia. UNHCR Colombia also carried out a campaign as part of the International Year on the theme "Lets put ourselves in their shoes", to draw attention to the situation of Afro-Colombians. The campaign includes the development of a website dedicated to the Year, a photography exhibition by two well known Colombian photographers and a fact sheet on the situation of people of African descent in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and the work that UNHCR carriers out with those populations.

In February, a youth conference was held in Costa Rica on the theme "Ties without borders" ("*Lazos sin Fronteras*"), which included the participation of some 180 adolescents, who discussed the challenges of local integration for migrants and refugees. The conference included the participation of youngsters of African descent

and was organized by UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, the Vice-Minister of Costa Rica for Youth, and the Council for Youth and Migration.

UNHCR Panama participated in a conference hosted by OHCHR to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As part of the event, women of African and indigenous descent spoke about integration and non-discrimination challenges in Panama.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNHCR plans to continue to work on community participation and self-management. Participatory assessment exercises will guide the design and implementation of programmes for the promotion of specific solutions for displaced indigenous communities of African descent. Leadership and human rights training to empower such communities will also be conducted.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Some of the activities to commemorate the International Year for People of African Descent are described below.

A worldwide videoconference involving teachers and experts was organized on 23 March 2011 at United Nations Headquarters in observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Several initiatives were developed for schools worldwide to commemorate the slave trade and its abolition in the context of the transatlantic slave trade education project, which links schools in the three regions involved in the triangular transatlantic slave trade (Africa, the Americas and Europe). The goal of the project is to increase awareness of the causes and consequences of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, including modern forms of slavery and racism, through educational exchanges, sharing best practices and developing and diffusing educational material.

In March and April, the UNESCO office in Brazil organized a series of seminars to launch the Portuguese edition of the UNESCO *General History of Africa*, in the context of the "Brazil-Africa: crossed histories project", which aims to promote recognition of the importance of the intersections of African and Brazilian histories, in order to reinvigorate relations between the different racial groups living in the country.

UNESCO will launch an international design competition for the construction of a permanent memorial at the United Nations in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Throughout 2011, UNESCO has scheduled a series of expert meetings and seminars as part of the International Year for People of African Descent. Studies, reports and publications have been launched in the context of the "slave route" project, and art exhibitions have been organized.

UNESCO will present a consolidated document on the activities held in the context of the International Year for People of African descent to the 187th session of its Executive Board and to the 36th session of its General Conference.

United Nations Children's Fund

In November 2010, the United Nations Children's Fund in Brazil launched a national campaign on the impact of racism on children, entitled "For a childhood free from racism: valuing differences in children is nurturing equality". The

campaign aims at mobilizing society around the need to ensure equal treatment and opportunities for all Brazilian children regardless of colour. The campaign will continue throughout 2011 as part of the International Year for People of African Descent. The campaign was launched owing to statistics indicating that 62 per cent of children aged 7 to 14 years who are out of school are of African descent and that the infant mortality rate of children of African descent aged 1 year and under is as high as 41.9 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with the national rate of 19 deaths per 1,000 live births. The event was attended by indigenous adolescents and adolescents of African descent, who had an opportunity to report on their experiences and perceptions in relation to racial inequalities.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

In anticipation of the International Year for People of African Descent, OHCHR developed a framework for action that was endorsed by the senior management team as an office-wide policy initiative to combat discrimination against people of African descent. The activities carried out at headquarters in the context of the International Year are described below.

On 2 March, in response to resolution 14/16 of the Human Rights Council, OHCHR organized a panel discussion during the high-level segment of the sixteenth session of the Council, that focused on the full enjoyment of the human rights of people of African descent. Panellists made presentations on the different chailenges that people of African descent face, such as education, housing, employment and their full integration into social, economic and political life and at all levels of decision-making. Panellists also identified good practices to effectively address such challenges.

On 7 March, OHCHR serviced the 78th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which, to mark the International Year, included a thematic discussion with presentations by invited expert panellists, including special procedures mandate holders, on racial discrimination against people of African descent. The Committee unanimously decided to prepare a general recommendation on the specific issue of combating discrimination against people of African descent, to be presented at its next session.

On 21 March 2011, OHCHR commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with an event that focussed on the situation of people of African descent, including a film highlighting the difficulties faced by such people in Argentina. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights addressed the event and released an opinion piece in the media on the subject of discrimination against people of African descent. Also, several special procedures mandate holders issued a joint statement on the theme "Recognition, justice and development: a roadmap to achieve full equality for people of African descent".

Between 28 March and 1 April, OHCHR serviced the 10th session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, which focused on the International Year. The thematic discussions held during the session contextualized the Year and further examined the situation that people of African descent face in a number of areas. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights made an opening address at the session, and a keynote address was given by a distinguished academic on the history of the slave trade and the need for a reparations movement. The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism,

racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance also participated, and a concert by a Swiss-Haitian singer was also held during the session.

An electronic toolkit was prepared by OHCHR to help staff in its field offices to work on the issue of people of African descent. The toolkit contains a large number of reports, resolutions, presentations and other documents relevant to the subject, to be used as a resource for combating racism and racial discrimination directed at people of African descent.

Between 16 and 20 April, OHCHR staff accompanied the working group of experts on people of African descent during its country visit to Portugal. The working group met with Government officials, inter-governmental organizations, academics, non-governmental organizations and members of the community of people of African descent. The members of the mission gathered information on the situation of people of African descent in Portugal, the challenges they face and the programmes and other initiatives being implemented to address those challenges. A report on the country visit will be submitted to the Human Rights Council.

Other activities planned for the second half of the year include a side event to the eighteenth session of the Human Rights Council, consisting of a panel of writers of African descent; a concert by musicians of African descent to be organized in collaboration with Governments; the publication of a compilation of the conclusions and recommendations made by the working group of experts on people of African descent; and a fellowship programme for people of African descent to spend a month in Geneva and learn about the different United Nations human rights mechanisms and how they function. OHCHR is implementing a wide-ranging public information strategy to promote the International Year, including the development of a logo for the Year in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Public Information; a dedicated section on the OHCHR website; press releases, information notes and feature stories on the web; and a range of electronic and print promotional materials. The majority of the initiatives will be produced in all six official United Nations languages. A public service announcement funded by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie will also be produced at the beginning of the second semester and distributed through an extensive array of public television broadcasters and posted on the Internet until the end of the year.

In September, the OHCHR Regional Office for Central America will organize a regional seminar to bring together international human rights experts and representatives of relevant non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, racial equality bodies and United Nations agencies from seven countries (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) to discuss the progress of the region's agenda to combat discrimination against people of African descent, identify challenges and foster closer interaction and synergy for further action.

The OHCHR Regional Office for Central America, with the support of La Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo, is implementing a two-year regional project in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama aimed at strengthening the capacity of four key actors (non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, racial equality bodies and the United Nations system) in order to promote and enhance the protection of the human rights of people of African descent.

In Costa Rica, the OHCHR Regional Office for Central America, with the support of the Anti-Discrimination Section of OHCHR, is collaborating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United Nations country teams to promote the elaboration of a national plan of action against discrimination.

The OHCHR Regional Office for Central America supports efforts within the Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Group to formalize the ad hoc United Nations regional inter-agency working group on people of African descent in order to place greater emphasis on inter-agency collaboration.

C. Regional and other intergovernmental organizations

Department of International Law, Organization of American States

The project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of International Law of Organization of American States (OAS) to incorporate issues regarding people of African descent in the policies and programmes of the OAS carried out the activities described below.

On 8 June 2010, the General Assembly of OAS approved resolution AG/RES 2550, on the recognition of the International Year for People of African Descent, and reaffirmed the importance of the full, free and equal participation of people of African descent in all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life in the counties of the Americas. The Department of International Law participated in the ninth session of the working group of experts on people of African descent, held in 2010, during which a discussion was held on possible activities to be carried out in 2011 in the context of the International Year.

On 22 January, the Department of International Law organized the second expert workshop on the subject of people of African descent in the Americas. At the workshop, four Government experts made presentations on the legislation, good practices, positive measures and public policies that are being implemented in their countries. A compilation of the presentations will be published and made available to the public. On 15 March, an extraordinary session of the OAS Permanent Council was held in celebration of the International Year, during which it reaffirmed its commitment to work in favour of the full, free and equal participation of people of African descent in all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life in the American States. The OAS Department of International Law was invited to participate at the 10th session of the working group of experts on people of African descent and to make a presentation under the agenda item "Durban +10".

On 27 April 2011, a workshop for the inclusion of people of African descent in the programmes and projects of the general secretariat of OAS was conducted at OAS headquarters. The workshop was directed at those functionaries of the secretariat involved in the design and implementation of technical cooperation projects. A workshop was held in Lima from 9 to 11 May, on empowering people of African descent in civil society in the inter-American system. The Department of International Law released two publications on people of African descent: (a) on 22 February, *Expert Workshop on the Subject of people of African descent in the Americas*, which compiles presentations given at a 2010 workshop on the theme addresses such topics as affirmative action, combating racial discrimination in

employment, the burden of proof in cases of discrimination and racial hatred; and (b) on 10 May, a publication on standards of protection for people of African descent in the inter-American system. On 7 June, the OAS General Assembly approved resolution AG/RES 2693, on the recognition and promotion of the rights of people of African descent in the Americas.

D. National human rights institutions and other independent bodies

Peruvian ombudsman's office

In the context of the International Year for People of African Descent, the Peruvian ombudsman's office prepared a report on people of African descent in Peru, offering an approach to their reality and the exercise of their rights. The report made visible the situation of people of African descent in Peru and, in its executive summary, states that such people face a particular historical and current context of inequality, exclusion and poverty. The preparation of the report began in February 2010 and included a series of meetings and interviews with representatives of different public institutions and the main organizations of Afro-Peruvian civil society. That investigation also included visits to the towns of Yapatera and Morropon, in Piura, and to Chincha, in Ica, where a series of problems were detected related to racism and discrimination, inclusion and the level of access to utility services by the population.

Representatives of the Peruvian ombudsman's office also met with staff of the national institute for the development of Andean, Amazonian and Afro-Peruvian peoples (*Instituto nacional de desarrollo de pueblos Andinos, Amazónicos y Afro-peruano*), the national centre for intercultural health, the Ministry of Education, the directorate for intercultural and bilingual education, the unit for educational statistics and the national institute for statistics, which provided complementary statistics. Furthermore, requests for information were sent to a wide range of institutions, including the Ministry of Women and Social Development, the Ministry of Justice and the national penitentiary institute.

The main findings of the research show the state of vulnerability and invisibility of that section of the Peruvian population, as well as the structural racial discrimination that persists and generates a negative impact on the full exercise of their rights, especially in the areas of health and education and those rights linked to their culture and identity. Preliminary versions of the report were presented to representatives of Afro-Peruvian civil society.

The main objective of the report was to make visible the situation of people of African descent in Peru. More detailed objectives were to identify the main obstacles faced by Peruvians of African descent in exercising their rights; to clearly identify the legal protection framework; and to evaluate the State's response to guarantee the rights of Peruvians of African descent.

The report concludes that an accurate calculation of the size of the Afro-Peruvian population does not exist, that structural discrimination represents one of the major issues facing Peruvians of African descent and that there is a lack of leadership and coordination on the part of the State that hampers its ability to fulfil its responsibilities to that population group. The report makes a number of recommendations to the Government of Peru.

E. Civil society, including non-governmental organizations

Association of African Entrepreneurs

In celebration of the International Year for People of African Descent, the Association of African Entrepreneurs planned various activities and events throughout 2011 to raise awareness about the challenges faced by marginalized African people and suggest ideas to tackle those challenges. The activities include community improvement forums, to be held in low-income African communities; online fundraising; the training of staff and members; work to attain consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council; the creation of a standard membership service through its website; web socializing by starting a network group on social media sites; the creation of a website in French to attract French speakers; and the facilitating of an onsite volunteering service.

Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal

The Centre for Social Studies decided to associate itself with the celebration of 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent and organized a wide set of multidisciplinary, political and ethical activities and debates in 2011 and beyond.

The Centre is organizing several studies on the issue of racism, on such themes as "Race and Africa in Portugal", as well as studies of school history books, on the semantics of tolerance and racism in Europe and of public bodies and civil society. In May, the Centre organized an international conference on the theme "Eurocentrism and racism beyond the positivist order: the politics of history and education".

The Centre is engaged in the critical questioning of Western and European images concerning Africa and in a critical reassessment of colonial inheritance and its historical accounts. It is organizing training courses, on the themes "Other Africas — heterogeneities, (dis)continuities, local expressions" and "Archives of silence: fragments and memories of the empire". The Centre is also organizing public activities open to academic and local communities, as well as a cycle of debates on Portuguese colonial history and a series of film screenings and debates on the experience and history of liberation struggles in Africa and migrations. It will be holding sessions with local high-school students to debate themes related to the International Year and public seminars to promote the knowledge of African thought and Africa's presence and contribution to the world. Other seminars will be held on the legacy of the Black Panther party, memory politics in Mozambique, African philosophy, colonial war, Africa's literary production and literature in the Portuguese language.

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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Programme of activities for the International Year for People of African Descent

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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III. Contributions received

A. Member States

Dominican Republic

[Original: Spanish]
[27 July 2011]

In order to commemorate the International Year for People of African Descent, the Ministry of Culture of the Dominican Republic created a commission to design and execute a programme of activities regarding people of African descent.

In July, a book on San Juan Bautista and Sarandunga Bani by Dagoberto Tejeda Ortiz was published and distributed; plaques were installed in memory of people of African descent; a walkthrough of the route in memory to people of African descent was coordinated with the department of cultural tourism; and a conference about the spiritual leader of people of African descent, Liborio Mateo, was led by historian Robert Cassa Place in the National Archives. The members of the committee for the International Year also participated in an initiative of the global foundation for democracy and development.

In August, a mass and presentation of musical groups of African descent will be held, and commemorative plaques will be unveiled to publicly recognize people of African descent.

In September, the international Liborio Mateo festival will take place; a monument to commemorate the death of Lemba will be inaugurated; a discussion will be held on the contributions that people of African descent have made to Dominican society; and a new edition of *Gaga Dominicano* by the anthropologist Jung Rosemberg will be distributed.

In October, an awards ceremony on the contributions of people of African descent to Dominican Republic society and an essay contest on Liborio Mateo will take place; a round-table debate will be held on the Boca de Nigua rebellion; along with a presentation of musical groups of African descent, in coordination with the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo. Arrangements will also be made to request that national congress declare 30 October the day of Dominican people of African descent.

In November, a floral offering will be made for Mama Tingo, the Afro-Dominican figurehead of the peasants' fight for land rights, and a conference will be held about her at the monument at the entrance of the town of Yamasa. A national seminar will be held on the presence and heritage of people of African descent in Dominican Republic society, as well as an event with music and gastronomy of African descendants, to be held at the national office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the Dominican Republic. The festival of San Miguel de Eneroliza will take place in the Mata los Indios community of Villa Mella.

In December, the work presented in the essay contest on the contribution of people of African descent in Dominican Republic society will be published and the festival of Sarandunga will take place in the village of Bani.